A Companion to Luis Buñuel

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A Companion to Luis Buñuel

Edited by

Rob Stone and Julián Daniel Gutiérrez-Albilla

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Introduction

The "Criminal" Life of Luis Buñuel

Rob Stone and Julián Daniel Gutiérrez-Albilla

Don't ask me my opinions about art, because I don't have any.

(Buñuel, 1982: 82)

In *The Self and Its Pleasures*, Carolyn Dean demonstrates that, since 1860, the "criminal" subject has conventionally been used as evidence of deviance and pathological behavior in order to define and to punish forbidden acts (1992). From this perspective, as the above epigraph from Luis Buñuel suggests, criminality designates the limits of the symbolic order and escapes rational conceptualization and representation. Criminality becomes a metaphor for that which it is impossible to symbolize, for that which escapes "that social rationality, that logical order on which a social aggregate is based" (Kristeva, 1982: 65). Buñuel's life and films therefore seem to encapsulate the implications of the term "criminality" due to their impossibility of being subjected to symbolization. However, if his work has been canonized and hence subjected to fixed symbolization by the numerous studies on his cinema, whether edited volumes or single-authored books in the Anglo-American academy and beyond, how can one engage critically with his *oeuvre* and yet avoid inserting his ambivalent, paradoxical and elusive films into pre-established critical models that perpetuate their subjection to symbolization? Even at the risk of "vandalizing" the canon, it is the purpose of this volume to revitalize and rejuvenate the study of the films of Buñuel by revising the crucial debates that have conditioned our understanding of his cinema and by offering a plethora of new approaches to his films that reflect and challenge the most relevant recent developments in the humanities in general and in film studies in particular. The chapters that follow thus focus on multiple, interdisciplinary perspectives on his cinema and yet remain faithful to the paradoxical, ambivalent, and heterogeneous nature of Buñuel's work, thereby avoiding any possibility of reducing his

A Companion to Luis Buñuel, First Edition. Edited by Rob Stone and Julián Daniel Gutiérrez-Albilla.
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work to fixed critical interpretations. It is to this emphasis on the creative, even emancipatory, potential of the concept of paradox underpinning Buñuel's life and films that this introduction now turns.

Condemned by the Vatican, exiled by Spain's Francoist dictatorship, celebrated by the French New Wave and an American Academy Award, as well as a great many filmmakers, Buñuel (1900–1983) is one of the most important, unique, and controversial figures in the history of cinema; but for all his reputation, films, and writings, he remains something of a sly unknown. The apparent coldness and deathly precision which his detractors identify in his films has, perhaps, done little to attract the interest his films deserve in the current generation of film scholars, students, and informed general spectators, who dutifully respect but perhaps do not gleefully engage with his still provocative and controversial work. Buñuel's great sense of humor is often over-analyzed to the extent that his satire falls flat, for instance. His punch lines are diluted by explanation, and the subversive power of great gags like the *tableau vivant* of beggars forming a parody of Leonardo da Vinci's *The Last Supper* in his scabrous *Viridiana* (1961) is too often treated as if in a dusty museum case instead of in the spirit of lucid, irreverent response. A knowing nod instead of a hearty guffaw is not the way to be affected by or to truly understand the ambivalent nature of Buñuel's work.

A Goya for the twentieth century, Buñuel remains something of an enigma that the plethora of academic and critical writing on his life and films has failed to undo entirely. The paradoxes begin with his love–hate relationship with Spain and continue with his exile, which complicates and confuses any notion of national cinema in relation to films that thrive on the volatile mix of sarcasm and sentiment that typifies his best work. A vociferous libertarian, his enduring marriage was characterized by jealousy and prudery. Buñuel was a thoroughbred chauvinist with a passion for embroidery, who despised what became of Spain during the Francoist dictatorship but recreated the most traditional of Iberian households while in exile in Mexico. The greatest Spanish filmmaker, he made only three films in Spain. He boasted of never having made a film that went against his singular vision, but his radicalism is often exaggerated and his outsider status is problematized by the fact that his most interesting work was produced under patronage, such as when claimed by France in the final years of his career. He was a beacon for political dissent, but he left the Communist Party quite early in his cinematic career (see Gubern and Hammond, 2012) and never once thereafter declared an orthodox affiliation to any particular political party. He made films about male desire and his female protagonists were often victims of it, but his films offered magnificent roles for actresses of the caliber of Silvia Pinal, Catherine Deneuve, and Jeanne Moreau. He satirized his own class but was a product of its privileges. He inveigled his spectators in the satire of authority, only to sucker them into identifying with this supposed enemy by reflecting his audience's own obeisance to good manners and decorum, for, as Gilles Deleuze diagnosed, "in Buñuel, servility is a feature of master as well as servant [and] degradation is the symptom of this

universal impulse" (Deleuze, 2005a: 141). He studied Sigmund Freud and applied his teachings to the study of the bourgeois consciousness but also pitied the humanity even in his oppressors, such as General Franco, "kept alive artificially for months at the cost of incredible suffering" (Buñuel, 1982: 256).

To some scholars Buñuel is a *bestia negra*, for others a *cause célèbre*. Yet, in decamping to one side or another of this most polemical character, we may fail to realize that his films and persona undercut any possible essentialist definition of what constitutes one's identity. The black humor, sinful eroticism, sight-gags and overwhelming nihilism of his films is all somewhat archetypically Spanish, having evolved through the centuries of Spanish literature and art that Buñuel devoured. Yet he was also a revolutionary who more than any other artist and filmmaker of the twentieth century seems to encapsulate and to have contributed to the pervasive artistic, political, and theoretical legacy of Surrealism. Consequently, many of the contributors to this volume rethink, both historically and textually, Buñuel's relationship with Surrealism or rethink Surrealism's relationship with Buñuel. In so doing, Surrealism is posited both as a historical avant-garde artistic movement as well as an aesthetic and political sensibility that impregnates subsequent cultural practices, including film, throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Hence, although a deep and wide engagement with Surrealism and its legacies is beyond the scope of this introduction, some basic ideas that underpinned this important artistic movement should be described here.

As is well known, the Surrealists were highly influenced by Freud's interpretation of dreams and his emphasis on the unconscious. As a result, they were fascinated by dreams as a route to the unconscious and were concerned with achieving immediacy of expression through automatic writing (associated with a method that André Breton himself and Philippe Soupault used in their 1919 text, *Les champs magnétiques* [Magnetic Fields]) and drawing (associated, for instance, with the drawings produced by André Masson). For the Surrealists, such activities were embraced in order to "circumvent the conscious control of image-making" (Ades and Bradley, 2006: 11). By means of these and other, similar techniques, such as rapid associative thought and experiments with collage, moreover, film appeared as the pliant and receptive artistic media in which to translate in an immediate and uncensored manner the images and ideas of the unconscious that are otherwise repressed in our conscious mind. As Buñuel himself wrote, "a film is like an involuntary imitation of a dream. … The cinema seems to have been invented to express the life of the subconscious" (cited in Mellen, 1978: 105–110). Drawing on Hegelian dialectics, Marxism, the Freudian discovery of the unconscious, and modern literary texts inscribed in "another" logic, from Lautréamont to Mallarmé, to name just a few, the Surrealists considered art in general and film in particular as being ideally suited not only for the representation of dreams but also for replicating at the level of form their process of figuration by means of emphasizing the uncanny and illogical juxtaposition of distant, if not incompatible realities revealed in the field of representation. Thus they conceived of art as a poetic process that mobilized our

unexpected encounters with the marvelous in our conscious and unconscious life. Such a formal revolution transcended the sphere of art and went far beyond this historical avant-garde artistic movement. It extended to other social spheres, thus stimulating deep political changes that would subvert the hegemonic, modern bourgeois ideology in the context of a society whose moral values and faith in rational progress had collapsed after the traumatic impact of and destruction caused by the World War I. As a result, the Surrealists believed in the significance of the violent force of desire – a desire for an impossible object that provoked the shattering of one's subjectivity, defined as *l'amour fou*. They also celebrated and explored the oneiric dimension of life and the intellectual and artistic creation free from positivist rationality, thereby attempting to liberate themselves from the burden of realist representation and from the aesthetic, moral, and political dictations of the dominant, modern bourgeois society at the psychic and social level. They did this through the use of horror, shock, comedy, the absurd, blasphemy, and violent and erotic imagery, to name just a few tools of Surrealism. As such, Bunuel's cinema has to be understood vis-à-vis both the development and the dissolution of this avant-garde movement as well as the crucial impact of Surrealism upon subsequent literary, film, and artistic practices and on theoretical debates, such as postmodernism, contemporary queer theory, and gender studies, as well as upon the anarchic, experimental sensibility that would embrace "criminality," dismiss "art," and overturn all "isms."

A Companion to Luis Buñuel thus addresses the relationship between historical analysis and contemporary artistic and theoretical reflection as a way of highlighting and encouraging us to think through the reverberations of Surrealism in Buñuel's cinema across spaces and times and recent art and critical theory. Buñuel's cinema seems to illustrate the theories from Surrealists who were crucial participants of this historical avant-garde movement. These include Breton, whose 1924 and 1929 manifestos establish the precepts of this artistic movement sketched above, and, more radically, the dissident Surrealist Georges Bataille, whose magazine, *Documents* (1929–1930), reflects the subversive energy and the violent confrontation of imagery and ideas associated with a heterodox Surrealism (see Ades and Baker, 2006) even as it refashions the aesthetic and ideological proposals of the earlier surrealist movement. In comparison, Buñuel's genius was his objectivity, which recognized the suppression of desire in any bourgeois setting, particularly when this corresponded to the hegemony of Catholic societies. To view his films is to undo any possible way of thinking in terms of privileging one term over another within dichotomies. Resonating with Baroque art and literature, Buñuel's life and cinema, as Carol Armstrong argues in a different context, "tend to keep self-dividing into opposite directions, which themselves never remain binary" (2012: 200). Awareness of this certainly allowed and accounts for the very different approaches undertaken by the contributors to this volume. As a result, we understand that all human life is chaos and the only point of structure in an otherwise hostile universe is this filmmaker's particular awareness of the

conscious and unconscious forms of our existence that continuously confront the struggle between hatred and love, creation and destruction, pleasure and pain, or between desire (*eros*) and death *(thanatos)*.

A close friend of the poet and playwright Federico García Lorca and one-time collaborator with the artist Salvador Dalí, Buñuel was an inveterate, self-taught filmmaker, who began by editing films with a magnifying glass on a kitchen table and was later fêted by the likes of Alfred Hitchcock and Billy Wilder. However, like Ingmar Bergman, Michelangelo Antonioni, Robert Bresson, and Jean-Luc Godard, Buñuel is too often consigned to a time capsule that on opening requires a critical empathy that is beyond many contemporary spectators. He gave few interviews and despised the critical incarceration of his work, famously deriding in the preface to the published script of *Un chien andalou*, "this imbecilic crowd that has found beautiful or poetic that which, at heart, is nothing other than a desperate, impassioned call for murder" (Buñuel, 2000: 162), which sets an admittedly severe challenge for a volume such as this. Nevertheless, *A Companion to Luis Buñuel* is testament to the fact that challenges can inspire as well as inhibit. It begins with this introduction that incorporates biographical details intended to refresh experts and inform newcomers alike and which celebrates what can be identified as the Buñuelian thematic and stylistic motifs in his films; and yet the volume avoids reducing his fascinating cinema to what Peter William Evans identifies as a narrowly auteurist approach (1995: 2). The filmmaker's biography may integrate and proceed with a discussion of the main themes that emerge in relation to the films but this does not exclude other possible thematics that underpin his often paradoxical and ambivalent work. Thus, although this introduction foregrounds some of the main themes that may elucidate Bunuel's cinema, the aim is to try not to perpetuate Gwynne Edwards's association of Buñuel's cinema with the struggling and opposing forces in the director's personality – Catholicism and Surrealism – as if these two opposing forces were exclusive in the constitution and formation of the personality or subjectivity of the filmmaker (Acevedo-Munoz, 2003: 3). As Julián Daniel Gutiérrez-Albilla explains in his study of Buñuel (2008), for Edwards Buñuel's films seem to be direct products of the personal expression of the director's creative imagination, whereas Sally Faulkner, citing Linda Williams's psychoanalytic study of Luis Buñuel (1996), claims that this unproblematic critical method mystifies and mythifies the Buñuelian *oeuvre*, thereby perpetuating a patriarchal epistemology which places the male, genius artist in total control of the meaning of his work. For Faulkner, these interpretations of Buñuel's cinema are static and ahistorical: "further, the individualism on which this theory is predicated is somewhat at odds with the collective nature of the surrealist movement" (2004: 128).

Proceeding from this, although the chapters in this volume are arranged to some extent chronologically, the reader is advised that Buñuel's cinema undercuts, paradoxically, any possible linear reading of his films. Instead, this structure aims for a productive tension that encourages the reader to find resonances across

chapters, for the focus of this volume is on the critical and theoretical implications of Buñuel's cinema with regard to the study of each contributor. In other words, using Buñuel's films as case studies, this volume concentrates on critical discourses and theoretical analyses, thereby exploring new ways of approaching the ambivalent and heterogeneous nature of Buñuel's cinema and proposing new critical and theoretical interventions and interrogations of it. If, indeed, we critics and academics, *aficionados* all, are to reveal ourselves as an "imbecilic crowd" for finding beauty and poetry in Buñuel's impassioned calls to murder, it is entirely in the sense that, as Billy Wilder stated, "an audience is never wrong. An individual member of it may be an imbecile, but a thousand imbeciles together in the dark – that is critical genius" (2012: s.n.).

An Aragonese Dog

Luis Buñuel Portolés (Figure 0.1) was born on February 22, 1900 in Calanda, a town in the province of Teruel, in Aragón, Spain, famous for its annual celebration involving the delirious beating of drums (Figures 0.2, 0.3, and 0.4). He was an unruly prodigy and the eldest of seven children born to the well-to-do Leonardo Buñuel, who had made his fortune from plantations in Cuba, and María Portolés, who gave him two brothers and four sisters. When Luis was still an



Figure 0.1 Luis Buñuel as a young boy. Courtesy of the Filmoteca Española.

infant, the family moved to Zaragoza, where the children received a typically disciplined Jesuit education at the private Colegio del Salvador. He was a virile and talented sportsman who inherited the family obsession with guns, but also a precocious scholar and a willful ruffian, whose delight at mischievous anarchy,



Figure 0.2 View of Calanda. Courtesy of the Filmoteca Española.



Figure 0.3 View of Calanda. Courtesy of the Filmoteca Española.



Figure 0.4 The drums of Calanda. Courtesy of the Filmoteca Española.

which would prove itself one of the most characteristic ingredients of his films, led to a beating by a study hall proctor. He subsequently left this Jesuit college, telling his parents he had been expelled, and completed his high school education in a local public school.

Nevertheless, aspects of his future career as a filmmaker may be usefully adjudged a prolonged reaction to the privilege and fear that governed education in Spanish society. This prompted his alliance with the first murmurings of atheist existentialism in a devoutly Catholic country. Already, then, he was the Buñuel who would delight in dressing up as a nun and riding trams in order to pinch the bottoms of scandalized ladies, the unruly scholar whose passion for insects inspired a similar appreciation of the workings of humans, whose second thoughts on the dominant Christianity and domineering Catholicism of Spain

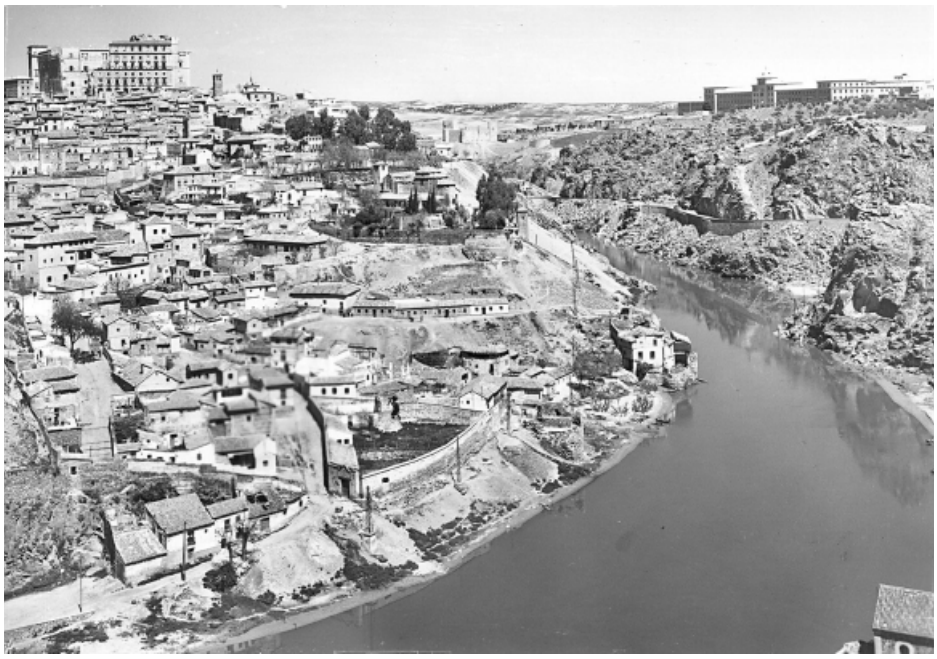


Figure 0.5 Toledo shortly after the Civil War (note the ruined Alcazar fortress top left). Courtesy of the Filmoteca Española.

revealed to him an alternative view of life that was both intensely personal and inevitably anarchic. Still, such restlessness would not find common cause or medium of expression until Buñuel left the provinces in 1917 to enroll in the University of Madrid to study agronomy and industrial engineering, later switching his degree to philosophy. There, in the boisterous kind of Oxbridge that was the Residencia de Estudiantes, a pedagogical experiment promoted by the philosopher Francisco Giner de los Ríos, he met Dalí and Lorca and engaged in an intense kinship that was complicated by Lorca's homosexuality, Dalí's asexuality, and Buñuel's at times brutish machismo, but which also fostered gleeful student pranks, many of which revolved around a pretend Order of the medieval city of Toledo (Figure 0.5). Their friendship and creativity contributed to the tremendous ebullience in philosophy and the arts, in which Freud's psychoanalytic focus on the structures of condensation and displacement in dreams and their relation to the unconscious and the aforementioned technique of free association (see Colman, 2003: 288) offered a viable alternative way of expression to the oppressive rationality of society; that was, the liberation of otherwise forbidden instinct in creative work and actions.

Yet, while Bunuel's indebtedness to the writings of Freud is apparent, some of the most compelling interpretations of his cinema foreground Jacques Lacan's rereading of Freud's unconscious in terms of being structured like a language. For

instance, focusing on *Un chien andalou* (An Andalusian Dog, 1929), *L'Âge d'or* (The Golden Age, 1930), *Le Fantôme de la liberté* (The Phantom of Liberty, 1974), and *Cet obscur objet du désir* (That Obscure Object of Desire, 1977), Linda Williams foregrounds the *mise en scène* of desire in order to demonstrate that Buñuel's films are analogous to dream structures and how they relate to the unconscious. For Williams, Buñuel's films disrupt the spectator's identification with the diegetic image, thus foregrounding the signifier. As such, Williams convincingly argues that the "Surrealists' interest in film arose not from the power of motion photography to create the illusion of diegetic time and space, but from the power of the image to structure this time and space into radically different forms" (1981: 143). Another Lacanian reader of Buñuel's cinema is Paul Sandro, who has primarily concentrated on the way in which Buñuel "perverts classical narrative structures through their violations of the conventions of spectatorship and wish fulfilment" (cited in Acevedo-Muñoz, 2003: 2). For Sandro, Buñuel's films disrupt cinematic representation by means of perturbing the specular position that they had initially determined for the spectator. Tracing a recurrent theme in most of Buñuel's films, Sandro contends that Buñuel's films establish a productive tension between the subject's desire and teleological aims and the contingent intrusions which endlessly prevent the subject's desires and projects from realizing itself or from achieving a certain form of closure. If this can be a central theme in Buñuel's cinema, it is at the level of cinematic form (such as an emphasis on a lack of linear, cause–effect narrative structure), that both foregrounds the constructed nature of representation and reflects or illustrates our frustrating desires for interpretation (Sandro, 1988).

Yet, Buñuel's cinema cannot be reduced to a Lacanian psychoanalytic emphasis on lack and castration and the privileging of the phallic signifier. If Deleuze has become a major influence in current film theory, it is worth underlining here the way in which Deleuze, together with Guattari, undid Lacanian psychoanalysis from within to rethink Bunuel's cinema beyond Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytic models. Deleuze and Guattari have attacked Lacanian psychoanalysis for remaining within the family framework. Although they do not totally break with the psychoanalytic paradigm (in fact Guattari was trained by Lacan and remained a member of Lacan's École Freudienne de Paris and a practicing analyst even after the 1972 publication of *Capitalisme et schizophrénie 1: L'anti-Œdipe*), Deleuze and Guattari propose a theory of desire that moves beyond the "privatized" individual psyche located within the Freudian Oedipal family. Their conception of desire is not contingent upon binary categories and exclusions, nor is it connected with lack, as in Lacan. Hence, we may rethink Buñuel's cinema as a springboard for reflecting upon the subject's liberation from his/her neurosis by privileging Deleuze's and Guattari's focus on the "schizos/flows" within, between and through partial subjects, thereby transforming the Freudian unconscious from a figurative or structural repository of repressed wishes into a revolutionary interaction of intensities. As a result, it would appear that Buñuel's films challenge an

orthodox psychoanalytic practice and theory that insists on the codification of the unconscious by privileging the productive freedom of the signifier instead.

A Golden Age

It is important to recall that film was a relatively new medium when it appeared to Buñuel, who even in the company of Dalí and Lorca professed to dislike painting and most poetry, as an innovative medium and the ideal canvas for the expression of his own ideas and ambitions. In the 1920s, however, Spain was stagnating somewhat in the context of an otherwise rapidly progressive world, one to which Buñuel, perhaps even more than Lorca and Dalí, belonged. Therefore, after graduating in 1925, the year of his father's death, he moved to Paris and worked in an administrative capacity for the International Society of Intellectual Cooperation. Thriving in Paris, he secured the position of second assistant director to the filmmaker, critic, and theorist Jean Epstein on the films *Mauprat* (1926) and *La Chute de la maison Usher* (The Fall of the House of Usher, 1928) and also assisted Mario Nalpas on *La Sirène des Tropiques* (The Siren of the Tropics, 1927) starring the African American singer and erotic dancer Josephine Baker. It was during this time as apprentice filmmaker that he also began writing and frequenting rarefied circles that gave rise to the notion of his actually making a film that would serve as calling card and, furthermore, as the sudden, unforeseen savior of the increasingly threadbare surrealist movement. Inviting Dalí to visit him in Paris on the promise that he would meet Pablo Picasso, Buñuel and he set about making the deliberately absurd, tragic, disturbing, and precious *Un chien andalou*, an 18-minute two-reeler, funded by his mother, that redefined cinema. *Un chien andalou* is nonsense played out as a series of threatened and threatening glances – double takes in search of an absent punch line (Figure 0.6).

The scandalous success of *Un chien andalou* led directly to Buñuel being both celebrated and chastised by the Surrealists, for his film embodied their ideas of revolutionary art at the same time as its success denied them. Interestingly enough, Buñuel's and Dalí's first film came out the year when the Surrealists begin to take either the side of Breton, who, following Hegelian metaphysics and Freudian metapsychology, claimed that the goal of Surrealism was to reach the point in the mind where contradictions ceased to exist, or of Bataille, whose emphasis on base materialism (associated with the disruption of the opposition between high and low) undercuts the Hegelian edifice in which the contradictions of knowledge are reconciled in the "Absolute" idea. The conflict between Breton and Bataille provoked the expulsion of Bataille and his followers, including André Boiffard, Robert Desnos, or Michel Leiris, from the surrealist movement, which led them to create the journal *Documents* as an alternative to what they considered the orthodox attitudes to Surrealism on the part of Breton (see Krauss and Bois, 2000). Although Buñuel seemed to have taken the side of Breton, *Un chien*



Figure 0.6 Buñuel in *Un chien andalou*. Courtesy of the Filmoteca Española.

andalou's focus on the "denigration of vision," to use Martin Jay's phrase (1994), as clearly illustrated by the opening sequence in which the female eye is slit, finds crucial resonances with Bataille's attack on the eyes and the primacy of vision in the Western epistemological tradition in his 1928 pornographic novel *Histoire de l'oeil* (Story of the Eye).

Delving further into libertine ethos, Buñuel discovered the work of Donatien Alphonse François, the Marquis de Sade, and fashioned the bohemian ideas of his *Les 120 journées de Sodome or l'école du libertinage* (120 Days of Sodom, 1785) into *L'Âge d'or*, his second, increasingly fraught collaboration with Dalí, funded by the Vicomte de Noailles, in which Christ appears as the leader of a group of murderous sadists. Buñuel fell out with Dalí during the making of the film, but it was also during this time that he met Jeanne Rucar, who he married in 1934 and who would bear him two sons, Rafael and Juan Luis; the latter would work with his father as assistant director and is interviewed in this volume. Already in *L'Âge d'or* the deadpan, lunatic farce, the doubtful distinctions between reality and fantasy, the enquiry into fetish, the melodrama of frustration, and the calculated disruption of the audience's gaze are present and contemptuous of logic, propriety, and reason. Also present was Buñuel's lifelong working practice of filming almost entirely in sequence and suffering very little wastage of film. He shot quickly, economically, and chronologically, rarely deviating from the script, and gave his cast few

directions besides those governing their movement. In later years he would assume the habit of switching off his hearing aid in order to ignore all the questions a director usually faces on set and would therefore work in silence, shooting a film in mostly wide shots and long takes that could be pieced together with little wastage in the editing suite. *L'Âge d'or* prompted the counter-attack of the religious and right-wing press that resulted in the film being banned for commercial screenings for 50 years.

A sudden celebrity in France, Buñuel could only have been dismayed by the lack of fame and industry that he found on his return to Spain. However, his friend, the anarchist Ramón Acín, promised to fund his next film if he won the lottery, and promptly did. *Las Hurdes*, aka *Tierra sin pan* (Land without Bread, 1932), is a bleak and virulent documentary on a poverty-stricken part of Spain where bread was unknown. The film deconstructs the conventions of the documentary genre with the disjunction of Pathé-style voice-over commentary and disturbing images, which creates a tension and incongruence that deliberately threatens the authoritative prerogative of the genre. *Las Hurdes* was promptly banned and would remain so for over 40 years. If, however, Buñuel's fictions mostly contain their absurdities within Classical or Romantic conventions, the enduring legacy of *Las Hurdes* on the documentary form is one that does broach a Modernist dialectic in its deconstruction of the conventions of the genre. Unlike the work of key documentarists, which includes the lyrical collages of Humphrey Jennings, the purportedly realist recordings of Robert Flaherty, the stark objectivity of Frederick Wiseman, or the procedural investigations and re-enactments of Errol Morris, Buñuel introduced a satirical element to the documentary that also victimized film form. Jeffrey Ruoff claims of *Tierra sin pan* that "no anthropological film from the 1930s provides such a comparable, almost encyclopedic, portrait of a given region or demonstrates such a subtle understanding of ethnographic film style," while also noting that the film attends to Modernist principles of playing at the edge of the form itself by effecting "a parody of ethnographic film" (Rouff, 1998: 45). Tracking the influence of Buñuel's subversive approach on the overriding seriousness of the documentary form is impossibly elusive but in addition to those that subtly investigate and explicitly debunk the authority of the form, such as *This Is Spinal Tap* (Rob Reiner, 1984) and *Borat: Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan* (Larry Charles, 2006), from the agitprop of Michael Moore to the faux-seriousness of *Catfish* (Henry Joost, Ariel Schulman, 2010) and the peculiar observation of a tortoise that prefigures the subtle classroom anarchies of *Être et avoir* (Nicolas Philibert, 2002), there is an arguably healthy legacy of not taking the documentary sufficiently seriously for the most po-faced of this genre's protectors.

Buñuel broke with the surrealist group in May 1932 because, as he reflected, "the movement was successful in its details and a failure in its essentials" (Buñuel, 1982: 123). Then, following his marriage to a pregnant Rucar in a secret civil ceremony so as not to upset either his family or his image as a committed libertarian,

he stubbornly dedicated himself to crucial efforts at establishing a viable Spanish film industry in his work for the Filmófono company. Between 1934 and 1936 he oversaw the making of four films as producer or "executive director," which has inspired inconclusive auteurist investigations into *La hija de Juan Simón* (Juan Simon's Daughter, 1935), *Don Quintín, el amargao* (Don Quintin, the Bitter, 1935), *¿Quién me quiere a mí?* (Who Loves Me?, 1936), which was directed by José Luis Sáenz de Heredia, and *¡Centinela, alerta!* (Guard! Alert!, 1937). Yet the Spanish Civil War began in 1936 and, being Republican-minded, the war found Buñuel moving between Madrid and Paris editing and dubbing propaganda for the cause, including a documentary short called *España 1936* (Spain 1936, 1937). Also in 1937, he allowed *Las Hurdes* to be reworked as propaganda for the Republican cause with a new commentary that put the blame for the social injustice represented in the film on the preponderance of fascism/Francoism in Spain. The end of the war in 1939 saw many artists and intellectuals seeking exile from the newly established church-backed fascist dictatorship of General Franco, and so began Buñuel's exile from Spain and a rupture in his relationship with Dalí, who had self-servingly criticized *L'Âge d'or* for its anti-clerical stance as a way of ingratiating himself with the victorious Francoist authorities.

The Forgotten One

In exile after the Spanish Civil War, Buñuel moved to New York and a position in the Museum of Modern Art, putting together compilation films, until Dalí's denunciation of *L'Âge d'or* and his accusing Buñuel of being a communist and an atheist in his 1942 autobiography *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí* allegedly inspired Cardinal Francis Spellman, archbishop of New York, to pressure the MoMA into pushing Buñuel to resign. Nevertheless, Fernando Gabriel Martín (2010) has demonstrated that Buñuel concocted fallacies about his status and options at this time in order to build up his notoriety and reputation as an avant-garde filmmaker whose international work in support of the Spanish Republic against Nationalist forces during the Civil War was also a way to avoid what became of Spain after it. This ushered in a period of work in Hollywood for Warner Brothers, mostly supervising the dubbing of films for the Latin American market, during which Buñuel claims to have submitted a script treatment to Warner Brothers about a disembodied hand, which became *The Beast with Five Fingers* (1946), for which he received no credit.

In 1946 he was invited to adapt Lorca's *La casa de Bernarda Alba* (The House of Bernarda Alba) for a film to be made in Mexico. Although the film was never made, he took his young family to Mexico, where he would establish an Aragonese home from home. As dual nationality was not possible, he relinquished his Spanish passport and acquired Mexican nationality in 1949. Undeterred from a

career in film, he began to progress through the flourishing Mexican film industry and made 20 of his 36 films in Mexico, most of which are known as *películas alimenticias* (fodder or bread-and-butter films). These include melodramas like *Susana* (Susana, aka The Devil and the Flesh, 1950), *La hija del engaño* (Daughter of Deceit, 1951), *Subida al cielo* (Ascent to Heaven, aka Mexican Bus Ride, 1951), and *Una mujer sin amor* (A Woman without Love, 1952), that all have moments of auteurist endeavor that have inspired revisions of his work and a drawing out of many themes and techniques that would come to typify his films in later years (Figure 0.7). These include the mocking of authority, satire, elegant japes and practical jokes, playful irreverence, and the serene and graceful narratives that are ruptured by transgressive images and sparked by witty subversion. As Ernesto Acevedo-Muñoz states, these films also "upset our image of Buñuel as the European surrealist phenomenon who was always ill-at-ease within a national film industry" (2003: 24). The first of these was *Gran casino*, aka *En el viejo Tampico* (Magnificent Casino, 1946), a vehicle for Jorge Negrete and Libertad Lamarque that was produced by Oscar Dancigers, for whom he later directed *El gran calavera* (The Great Madcap, 1949). This was a modest success at the box office that encouraged Dancigers to back Buñuel's *Los olvidados* (The Forgotten Ones, aka The Young and the Damned, 1950), a film in which Buñuel reworked the formal antecedent of *Las Hurdes* by utilizing Surrealism as a way out of the



Figure 0.7 Buñuel directing Julio Villarreal in *Una mujer sin amor*. Courtesy of the Filmoteca Española.

dead-end streets of what Buñuel identified as the lack of poetry in neorealism and consequently signaled the way for New Latin American Cinema. *Los olvidados* won the award for best director and the International Critics' prize in Cannes in 1951. It is in this period that Buñuel developed his directorial vision and his method of filming that was allied to the evolution of his ideology, his philosophy, and his sense of humor. It was in Mexico that he immersed himself in the process of becoming great, learning his craft, earning his keep, and practicing the expression of his singular vision. No wonder that *Los olvidados* was selected by the International Advisory Committee of the UNESCO's Memory of the World Programme (Gubern, 2003: 12).

The transnational nature of much of Buñuel's work inspires several chapters in this volume and the theme of exile simmers beneath many of those that are ostensibly about other matters. In effect, Buñuel was a transnational filmmaker long before that term embedded itself within the contemporary lexicon of film scholarship. However, his exile from Spain was not exactly in accordance with the view of the Palestinian-American literary theorist Edward W. Said when he wrote that exile is something "strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience" (2000: 173) because Buñuel's exile was arguably the making of him. Had he remained in Spain and suffered the church-backed dictatorship of Franco he might never have encountered the training, liberty, and patronage that he did in Mexico and France. Nevertheless, exile is such a common theme in his films and in the academic analyses they inspire that the nature of the outsider's gaze that determines the viewpoint of his films is worth a cautious, initial investigation.

In *Reflections on Exile*, Said famously described exile as "the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home" (2000: 173), and he surmised that "its essential sadness can never be surmounted" (2000: 173). Seeking to understand why exile had become such a potent "enriching motif of modern culture" (2000: 173), he posited the view that we had become accustomed to thinking of the "modern period itself as spiritually orphaned and alienated [as] the age of anxiety and estrangement" (2000: 173). We were all orphaned, not in space but in time, being separated from meaningful pasts and adrift in the meaninglessness of a fog that resembles postmodernism. However, as a counterweight to this, Said invokes the example of James Joyce becoming more Irish than ever while in exile in Trieste, like the Welsh in Patagonia, like the Irish in Chicago; only Said is less concerned with diasporic communities than he is with the individual exile as a creative person with a mission. Joyce, he claims, actually "chose to be in exile: to give force to his artistic vocation" (2000: 181), which certainly prompts the question of the extent to which the same might be true of Buñuel.

Said examines the literature of exile and condemns its trivialization of the condition, although he does find cause for celebration in the condition or act of seeing the entire world as a foreign land, which makes possible, or so he claims, originality of vision. In his conclusion, he states:

> Most people are principally aware of one culture, one setting, one home; exiles are aware of at least two, and this plurality of vision gives rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions, an awareness that – to borrow a phrase from music – is contrapuntal. (2000: 186)

To what extent is contrapuntal awareness something different from exile and nomadism? Instead of a single view of home from a distant homeland, with all its attendant melancholy, resentment, or longing, what of the more complex dual viewpoint – this contrapuntal to-ing and fro-ing of the dislocated – and how it might be rendered in aesthetic terms? One way of representing contrapuntal awareness is by balanced or symmetrical subjectivities – although a consequence of this is the impossibility of ever anchoring a filmmaker's viewpoint, for Buñuel is effectively without anchor, eternally oscillating, moving from one foreign context to another (Spain, the United States, Mexico, and France) and having to deal with new restrictions in each culture. Contrapuntal awareness sees the artist or writer becoming in effect his/her own reflection, looking back at himself/herself in both directions, which perhaps, as Said suggests, may be calculated to kick-start creativity. Although one might assume that the restrictions found in these cultures would have withheld artistic liberty, perhaps, like Joyce, they also sharpened Buñuel's wits as a profound observer and critic. At the very least, his experience of travel must have made him appreciate picaresque fiction, where modular episodes are unified only by the presence of the central character that is similarly forced to move on continuously from one adventure to the next. Did Buñuel see himself as a *pícaro* – the rogue or rascal who lives by his wits in corrupt societies? At the very least, Buñuel's severe criticism of nationalism included his rebuke of the nationalist rhetoric inherent in Mexican cinema at the time of his stay in Mexico.

Many critics in this volume and elsewhere have written and spoken on this aspect of Buñuel's work: that much like Roman Polanski and Andrei Tarkovsky it was exile that made him the filmmaker that he was. The Russian theorist Mikhail Bakhtin claims that "consciousness awakens to independent ideological life precisely in a world of alien discourses surrounding it" (1981: 360) but when did this happen for Buñuel, if ever? As described, after his formation in France, his first solo effort as a director and his first film made in Spain was *Las Hurdes,* with which he brought the surrealist aesthetic home. But is the surrealist aesthetic based on an awakening consciousness from which the imagination emanates enriched enough to justify the claim of a contrapuntal awareness in the making of this and other films? That is to say, was he looking at American, Mexican, French, and Spanish culture from the outside in or was it a participatory engagement in all cultures? Where on Earth did Buñuel belong?

This multiple vision of exilic perspectives helps to explain the objectivity that is maintained in his films because, for all its entomological reserve, the camera cannot resist equal observation of and reflection about saints and sinners, victims and terrorists, slaves and masters. Nevertheless, it is this contrapuntal awareness that

actually prompts an aesthetic response in the floating, unaligned camerawork and restrained, functional editing that contributes to the Surrealism of his films. This multiple viewpoint, which posits the figure of Buñuel as in exile from many places at the same time, is nonetheless problematic because it works against the critical discourse by which the cultural production of exiled artists is frequently conceptualized in terms of loss, because, in a sense, Buñuel found his voice and discovered his artistic vision in exile. Yet, despite his break with national and cultural origins, which inspires critics to seek evidence of his belonging or not belonging to Mexico, France, and Spain, Buñuel is not fixated on one land, as Joyce is with Ireland, for example. His deterritorialized gaze can therefore be understood according to Bakhtin's notion that "it is immensely important for the person who understands to be located outside the object of his or her creative understanding – in time, in space, in culture. In the realm of culture, outsideness is a most powerful factor in understanding" (1986: 7). Even in Buñuel's earliest films it is evident that he is fascinated by geographically isolated settings and foreign characters who are strangers in strange lands and struggling to belong. His version of *Robinson Crusoe* (1952) is thus the exception that proves the rule because, unlike the protagonists of *El ángel exterminador* (The Exterminating Angel, 1962), *La Mort en ce jardin* (Death in the Garden, aka The Diamond Hunters, 1956), *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* (The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie, 1972) and others, Crusoe actually defeats his surroundings and escapes.

Strange Passions

Buñuel would be based in Mexico for the rest of a life punctuated by extended visits to make films in the United States, Spain, and France. The 1950s found him hard at work in Mexico, long before the period of refined creativity in Paris from which his most famous films sprang. Indeed, the decade is characterized by his prolific filmmaking activity and a series of wry, charming, idiosyncratic films which attest to both his technical efficiency and his febrile creativity. Between 1950 and 1955, he made 12 films, including *El bruto* (The Brute, 1952), the aforementioned English-language *Robinson Crusoe*, the increasingly seminal-looking *Él* (This Strange Passion, 1952), *La ilusión viaja en tranvía* (Illusion Travels by Streetcar, 1953), *Abismos de pasión* aka *Cumbres borrascosas* (Wuthering Heights, 1954), *El río y la muerte* (The River and Death, 1955), the sinister and perverse *Ensayo de un crimen*, aka *La vida criminal de Archibaldo de la Cruz* (Rehearsal of a Crime, aka The Criminal Life of Archibaldo de la Cruz, 1955), *Cela s'appelle l'aurore* (That is the Dawn, 1956), and *La Mort en ce jardin* (Figure 0.8).

The success of certain of these films in foreign festivals led to his growing prestige and influence in Spain and elsewhere, and he perhaps began to accept and express his responsibility and maturity as a filmmaker in *Nazarín* (1959), which was



Figure 0.8 Buñuel with Jean Cocteau in 1955. Courtesy of the Filmoteca Española.

based on a novel by the nineteenth-century Spanish writer Benito Pérez Galdós (Figure 0.9). Concurrently, *La Fièvre monte à El Pao* (Fever Mounts at El Pao, 1960) and the English-language *The Young One* (1960), based on a short story by the American novelist Peter Mathieson, revealed his social concerns and the fact that his pronounced anti-clericalism hid a respect for patient, earthly penance. Inevitably, this growing political commitment turned his thoughts back to Spain and the ruling Francoist dictatorship, a regime which had censored free thought and expression and consequently stifled all attempts at dissident cinema. Yet, at the same time, Buñuel's friendship with a young Spanish filmmaker called Carlos Saura, who under his influence would become the most accomplished, rebellious, and internationally renowned director in Spain at that time, led to him returning to Spain to make *Viridiana* which, like *Nazarín*, featured pious characters creating havoc with their charitable endeavors (Figures 0.10 and 0.11). *Viridiana* would be excoriated by the Vatican, prohibited by the Spanish censors, and burnt by the authorities. In fact, only a single copy of *Viridiana* survived this incursion into Francoist territory and the major scandal of its prize-winning screening at the Cannes film festival and its denunciation the day after in the Vatican newspaper *L'Osservatore romano* (Figure 0.12). Thus, although the golden age of Mexican cinema was ending, Buñuel entered the 1960s at the forefront of World cinema, a position that he and his films would occupy for the rest of his years.



Figure 0.9 Buñuel with the dwarf and cinematographer Gabriel Figueroa filming *Nazarín*. Courtesy of the Filmoteca Española.



Figure 0.10 Filming *Viridiana*. Courtesy of the Filmoteca Española.



Figure 0.11 Buñuel (right) directing Fernando Rey (left) and Silva Pinal in *Viridiana*. Courtesy of the Filmoteca Española.



Figure 0.12 Buñuel directing Silvia Pinal in *Viridiana*. Courtesy of the Filmoteca Española.

In subsequent Spanish cinema, we can trace explicit and implicit intertextual relationships between Buñuel and Spanish film movements and filmmakers. For instance, the allegorical cinema of the 1970s, whose emphasis on the use of the "trope of haunting," to use Jo Labanyi's concept, was an effective cinematic mechanism less as a way of negotiating with the conventions of the horror film genre than as a kind of surrealist incursion into the horrific for the representation of the violence of the Spanish Civil War and its repressive aftermath through, as Labanyi has put it, the use of suggestion rather than statement (2007). Another example is the explicit reference to *Ensayo de un crimen* in Pedro Almodóvar's *Carne trémula* (Live Flesh, 1997), which functions as a way of drawing attention to, as Peter William Evans and Isabel Santaolalla have rightly suggested, "a common interest in black comedy, the contents and discontents in relations between the sexes, and the family as the crucible for the formation, and sometimes the perversion, of human personality" (2004: 1). The influence of Buñuel is also strong on the psychological cinema of Julio Medem, whose emphasis on split personalities and multiple subjectivity in films such as *Tierra* (Earth, 1996) becomes a political reflection on the pain of separation from one's place of origin, due to the pervasive conflict between Basque nationalism and Spanish nationalism and the suffering of those who experience an intensified nostalgia for a past and a present that is already lost. Buñuel is also present in the postmodern cinema of Bigas Luna, whose Iberian trilogy containing *Jamón jamón* (1992), *Huevos de oro* (Golden Balls, 1993), and *La teta i la lluna* (The Tit and the Moon, 1994) seems to refashion the legacy of Surrealism as being already mediated by the language of global advertising, thereby de-voiding it from the initial aesthetic and political purposes of this historical artistic movement. Bigas Luna, in the same way as Buñuel did, offers us, however, a ferocious critique of the preponderance of Hispanic machismo in Spanish society.

With regard to Latin American cinema, Buñuel's films, particularly *Los olvidados*, can be seen, as John King (1990) informs us, as obliquely anticipating a more auteurist, overtly political Left-oriented, and formally experimental new cinema in Latin America, epitomized by the postclassical generation of Mexican film directors and filmmakers in Cuba, Argentina, and Brazil, whose cinematic productions put into practice the theories these filmmakers wrote in their film manifestos. The resonances of Buñuel's cinema are also found in the explicit surrealist films of Alejandro Jodorowsky, whose cinema resorts to a combination of violent imagery and mysticism to offer a provocative view of religion and of society. Buñuel's influence also extends to the work of Glauber Rocha, who, as a father of the Brazilian Cinema Novo movement, thought of the formal qualities of cinema as a powerful means of expressing subversive political views by combining mysticism and regional folklore, while explicit homage is evident in Alejandro González Iñárritu's *Amores perros* (2000), in which a Spanish model (Goya Toledo) has her leg amputated and it is from this immobilized position that this Tristana-like woman is able to exercise control over her adulterous lover.

Such references imply "a kind of dialogue that is staged by the critic as a form of intertextuality; and, just as with intertextuality, to accomplish the staging of a

dialogue one does not have to prove an 'influence' from one work to the other. The juxtaposition of works and making them speak to each other should suffice" (Suleiman, 1998: 152). From this perspective, while this volume probes the significant legacy of Buñuel's cinema upon European and World cinema, in general, and, as sketched here, Spanish and Latin American cinema, in particular, several contributors explore the way in which subsequent Spanish, European, and World cinema allows us to see Bunuel's cinema in a new light. As such, instead of fixing meanings, Buñuel's cinema always means something different to different constituencies. In other words, the concept of intertextuality allows us to reconsider Buñuel's cinema as always being, or becoming, in excess of the closure of interpretation and representation, always creating new representational spaces and interpretative positions that enable transversal, flexible cultural practices and critical readings that emerge and disappear endlessly through space and time.

An Exterminating Angel

Once more exiled from Spain following the "Viridiana affair," Buñuel returned to Mexico with a new sense of self, a fresh belief in the potency of protest and firm ideas about the still pervasive role of Surrealism on film as a tool of sexual, social, and political subversion through an emphasis on the transgression of classical narrative and cinematic conventions. Drawing on Hal Foster's theoretical engagement with the Bataillean strain of Surrealism (Foster: 1996), Gutiérrez-Albilla explains this purposeful search for an association of sexual, social, and political subversion with formal transgression on the part of Buñuel and finds it "located at a point of internal crisis, which shows the symbolic authority in a state of emergency" (2008: 6). The aim of transgression, moreover, arises from experience that "points less to the concept of the limit, which entails a line that cannot be crossed [as for the bourgeois characters in *El ángel exterminador*], than to the fold in which the stability of the relationship between the inside and the outside gives way to a limit that exists only when it is crossed" (Gutiérrez-Albilla, 2008: 6). The result of this new intensity of focus was indeed *El ángel exterminador*, in which a bourgeois dinner party is derailed from decorum by the eruption of all forms of carnal and immoral instincts, resulting in an orgy of sinfulness. Following the Cannes victory of *Viridiana*, *El ángel exterminador* showed that the playful and sarcastic Buñuel was just entering his stride as the purveyor of cinematic diatribes against social injustices and, more pointedly than ever, the traditions and hypocrisies of the Catholic Church. Newly celebrated and even bankable, Buñuel began to accept offers of work from Europe that were in tune with his own peculiar vision, most of which came from the producer Serge Silberman (Figures 0.13 and 0.14). *Le Journal d'une femme de chambre* (Diary of a Chambermaid, 1963) was an adaptation of the novel by Octave Mirbeau and was his consecration in a cinematic milieu that was largely



Figure 0.13 Buñuel with producer Serge Silberman. Courtesy of the Filmoteca Española.

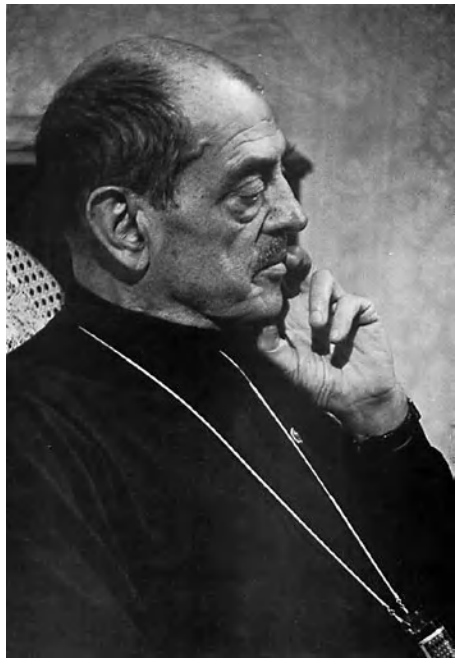


Figure 0.14 Portrait of Buñuel at work. Courtesy of the Filmoteca Española.

the product of the French critics associated with the French New Wave and their zealous theories of auteurism; for Buñuel fitted their criteria more than most by his distinctive single-mindedness and his immutable stance on the petty tyrannies of the bourgeoisie (Figures 0.15, 0.16, 0.17). This was a belief that complemented the growing Marxist influence on the French New Wave and would see Buñuel become a frequent visitor to France in the following years, even to the extent of establishing another Iberian home from home in Paris.

The 1960s saw Buñuel moving back and forth between Mexico and France, between avant-garde works such as the Mexican short film *Simón del desierto* (Simon of the Desert, 1965), an anarchic trial of saintliness that revisited the bizarre imaginings of his first surrealist films, and the massively popular *Belle de jour* (1967), adapted from the novel by Joseph Kessel, which revealed a fresh accessibility and sophistication in his work and a different kind of Surrealism vis-à-vis his early avant-garde films (Figures 0.18, 0.19, 0.20, and 0.21). It is in *Belle de jour* that Surrealism is deployed in the construction of a story as opposed to its destruction, where its lack of meaning is paradoxically a signifier for the fact that the world itself is without meaning. As Arnaud Duprat de Montero explains in this volume, Surrealism can no longer be Surrealism when contemporary society is so ideologically confused that people cannot situate



Figure 0.15 Buñuel directing Jeanne Moreau in *Le Journal d'une femme de chambre*. Courtesy of the Filmoteca Española.



Figure 0.16 Filming *Le Journal d'une femme de chambre*. Courtesy of the Filmoteca Española.



Figure 0.17 Buñuel and Jeanne Moreau on the set of *Le Journal d'une femme de chambre*. Courtesy of the Filmoteca Española.



Figure 0.18 Jean Sorel, Luis Buñuel, and Catherine Deneuve on the set of *Belle de jour*. Courtesy of the Filmoteca Española.



Figure 0.19 Michel Piccoli, Catherine Deneuve, and Buñuel filming *Belle de jour*. Courtesy of the Filmoteca Española.



Figure 0.20 Buñuel directs Catherine Deneuve on the set of *Belle de jour*. Courtesy of the Filmoteca Española.



Figure 0.21 Buñuel's cameo appearance in *Belle de jour*. Courtesy of the Filmoteca Española.

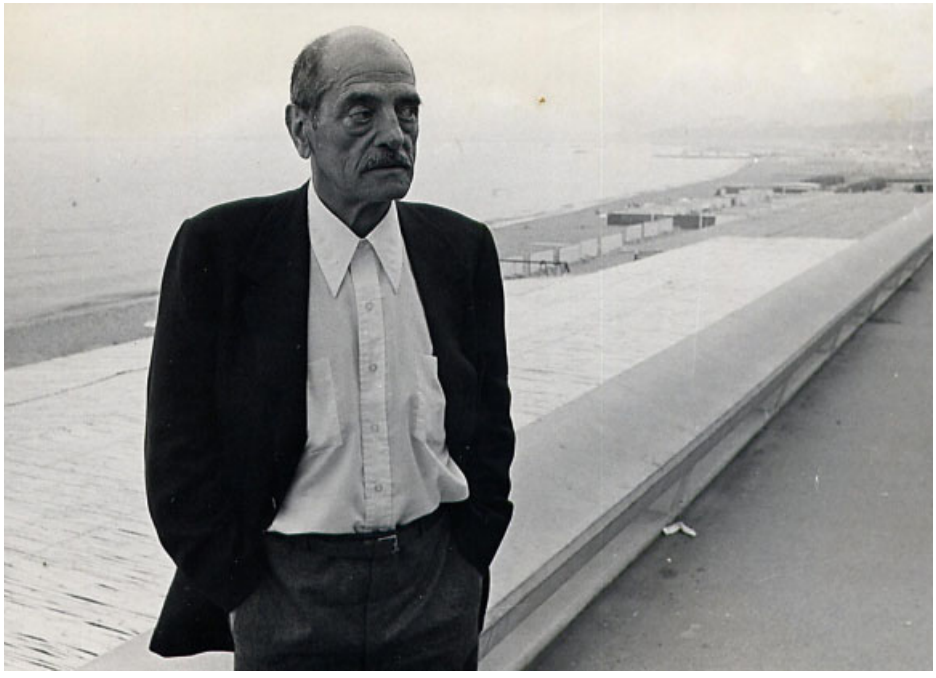


Figure 0.22 Buñuel attending a film festival. Courtesy of the Filmoteca Española.

themselves in any form of coherent opposition. From this perspective, by the 1960s, Buñuel's cinema already points to an ambivalent, if not productive, tension between the use of a grand narrative that is the product of modernity, namely Surrealism, and the consciousness of the impossibility of the grand narratives or metanarratives to account for all the dilemmas of human understanding. Indeed, this will be the crucial concern for postmodern thinkers and artists in the subsequent decade when in 1979 Jean-François Lyotard writes his seminal book, *La condition postmoderne: rapport sur le savoir* (The Postmodern Condition: A Rapport on Knowledge).

The 1970s was the period which, arguably, sees a blunter edge to Buñuel's anarchy, in which films such as *La Voie lactée* (The Milky Way, 1969) point to the growing presence of a more sardonic humor in his films and the expression of less harmful, more reflective Surrealism (Figure 0.22). It is also, perhaps uncoincidentally, the period of his collaboration with the producer Silberman and the screenwriter Jean Claude Carrière. It is one of contentment, both financial and familial, that saw Buñuel fêted once more by Hollywood and the cultural elite of European and World cinema with the influence of his unique vision beyond Spanish and Latin American cinema being felt on non-filmmakers too. Suffice, perhaps, to note that after witnessing *L'Âge d'or* avowed fan Henry Miller proclaimed that "they should take Buñuel and crucify him, or at least burn him at the stake. He deserves the greatest reward that man can bestow upon man"

(Grant, 2000). Even so, the growing influence of Buñuel's films on other filmmakers is both immense and vague, perhaps more inspirational in deed and singularity of vision than in any directly imitative or allusive manner. Other surrealist filmmakers certainly pay their dues – Jan Švankmajer's beetle crawling from a human head in *Poslední trik pana Schwarcewalldea a pana Edgara* (Last Trick, 1964), David Lynch's ant-infested ear in *Blue Velvet* (1986), and the fly-infested eye of the cow in Medem's *Vacas* (Cows, 1992) all offer respectful homage to *Un chien andalou*. Yet the trickle-down influence of his films is perhaps more often discernible in the work of idiosyncratic filmmakers rather than in any anti-church of Buñuelian disciples. The sense of dislocation that emerges from a study of his films is one that inspires empathy in any number of mavericks and outsiders. This individuality, which saw him split from the Surrealists and the Communists, was disparaged by Sergei Eisenstein in his memoirs (1946) in which the Soviet theorist and filmmaker describes *Un chien andalou* as "a film that totally and consistently reveals the prospects for the collapse of bourgeois consciousness in 'surrealism'" (1997, II: 327) without responding to the potential alternative of the ascendant socialist state. Nevertheless, David Gillespie notes of Soviet cinema that "there are some unmistakeable traces of surrealist influence in some films of the early 1930s, no doubt informed by the work of Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí before Soviet cultural isolationism really set in under Stalin" (Gillespie, 2006: 49) and he identifies Alexander Faintsimmer's *Poruchik Kizhe* (Lieutenant Kizhe, 1934) as a particularly indebted example, "a satirical swipe at the tsarist court," whose irrational juxtapositions blur the barrier between dream and reality (Gillespie, 2006: 50).

In relation to Eastern European cinema in general, Joanna Rydzewska has written of Surrealism as a signifier of exile into another reality, although the direct influence of Buñuel is refracted through the work of other filmmakers such as Walerian Borowczyk, Jan Lenica, and Jan Švankmajer (Rydzewska, 2012). However, direct references to Buñuel also punctuate the films of Borowczyk, Jerzy Skolimowski, and Polanski, including Borowczyk's image of Ewa lying on a bed in *Dzieje grzechu* (The Story of Sin, 1975), which is a straight quotation from *Viridiana* that points to these films' shared exploration of sin, and the prostitute's leg in a cast in Skolimowski's *Deep End* (1970), which is fetishized like that of *Tristana*. In addition, Polanski's shot of a shot eye at the climax of *Chinatown* (1974) recalls Buñuel's cut to a cut eye in *Un chien andalou*, while his *Carnage* (2012) was commonly seen as a reimagining of *El ángel exterminador* because, as one critic observed, "the bourgeoisie hasn't been this gleefully *épatered* since Buñuel" (Smith, 2012: 47). Foremost amongst Eastern European filmmakers of a surrealist ilk, however, is the Czech animator Švankmajer, who, unlike Buñuel, actually realized his vision for a film of Edgar Allan Poe's *The Fall of the House of Usher* entitled *Zánik domu Usherů* (1981). "Like Buñuel, he was confronted by a totalitarian regime whose political and social manifestations were often 'surreal'" (Uhde, 2006: 63). Švankmajer's numerous

shorts and few feature-length films are made with stop-motion animation that includes the manipulation of human figures in order to satirize the totalitarianism that so completely controlled the citizens of Prague and Czechoslovakia prior to the Velvet Revolution.

The satire that characterizes several emerging European filmmakers of the 1960s is clearly influenced by the films of Buñuel but also, in their youthful, boiling passions and desire for revolution, frustrated by his long-term, eternally simmering campaign against bourgeois complacency and arrogance. The films of Godard provide numerous moments of potentially surrealist subversive disruptions, whether playfully incongruous as in *Une femme est une femme* (A Woman Is a Woman, 1963) or furiously satirical as in *Week-End* (Weekend, 1968) in which a middle-class couple's attempts to leave Paris are stymied by an excruciating, ten-minute sequence of a traffic jam that ends with the frustrated couple accelerating past the eventual reveal of a gruesome accident. Godard's attack on the priorities of the French middle class tallies with the same atheist, existentialist Marxism that has been identified in many of the films of Buñuel and more recently in those of Lars von Trier, such as *Idioterne* (The Idiots, 1998). However, whereas Buñuel was to some extent a Classical or Romantic filmmaker, Godard and von Trier are defiant, belligerent Modernists. Buñuel uses the conventions of film form and turns them against the audiences that they are intended to satisfy and entertain in narratives that offer a pretend veneer of seeming normality, but which are punctured by eccentricities, obsessions, and perversions, whereas Godard and von Trier are Modernists who expose the workings of the machine by criticizing and consciously eroding film form itself, with von Trier disabling it with his Dogme '95 manifesto and Godard ending *Week-End* with a title-card proclaiming not the end of the film but the end of cinema – "fin du cinéma" – too.

Where Surrealism flowers in mainstream film, the influence of Buñuel is most often felt in a haptic sense, whereby it is provoked by the eruption of the incongruous, the juxtaposition of the ordinary with the extraordinary and the blurring of divisions between reality and fantasy. Michael Powell co-directed with Emeric Pressburger such insistently surrealist films as *A Canterbury Tale* (1944) and *"I Know Where I'm Going!"* (1945) as well as the epic explorations of themes favored by the Surrealists such as fate and coincidence in *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* (1943), love beyond death in *A Matter of Life and Death* (1946), and passion and obsession in *Black Narcissus* (1947), and for him Buñuel was nothing less than "my master, the only filmmaker I would defer to. He has known from the beginning what most of us have only learnt in brief moments of clarity" (Powell in Spicer, 2006: 110). That each of these films contains parodic representations of Britishness, whose eccentricities would give way to perversion in Powell's initially reviled and enduringly nasty *Peeping Tom* (1960), also points to a filtering through Powell and Pressburger of Buñuel's satirical influence to reach Monty Python and the group's animator-turned-director Terry Gilliam; for Monty Python targeted class and religion too. Their lampooning of decorum, social propriety, and authority was, like that of

Buñuel, founded on observational humor but then taken to the extremes of blissfully transgressive dialogue and behavior that ridiculed the uptight and buttoned-down. The difference between Monty Python and Buñuel is that Pythonesque characters know they are absurd, whereas Buñuelian ones do not. Thus, the cheese shop sketch, in which the proprietor (Michael Palin) fails to provide anything from his customer's interminable list of cheeses, ends with the customer (John Cleese) remarking, "right, well I'm going to have to shoot you then" and the shop owner acquiescing with servile grace. Likewise, the parody of faith and its followers that is *Life of Brian* (1979), which ends in the self-conscious absurdity of the crucified carolling "Always Look on the Bright Side of Life." In sum, a customer in a film by Buñuel would never have taken his dead parrot back to the pet shop to complain, but would have kept it in a cage as an incidental talking point at dinner parties. Gilliam, meanwhile, whose animated segments for the Monty Python television series are hugely indebted to those of Švankmajer, is also an obvious acolyte of Buñuel; his opening sequence for *Brazil* (1985), for example, replicates the explosive imagery that ended *Cet obscur objet du désir.*

The horrors of the British middle and upper classes that ironically birthed most members of Monty Python, just as Buñuel was a product of the Spanish equivalent, are also targeted in the films of Lindsay Anderson and Ken Russell. Anderson's *If…* (1968) is a virulent satire of the public school system punctuated by the vivid carnal fantasies of its revolutionary schoolboys, while in *The Devils* (1971) and other films, Ken Russell revels in the kind of violent, sexual imagery that heralds a kindred reaction against Catholicism in which the blurring of fantasy and reality is amassed by startling juxtapositions and disturbing cross-cutting that speaks to the influence of Buñuel. The claustrophobia of a room full of mismatched people that Buñuel mines to great satirical effect in *El ángel exterminador* and *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* is also a staple of the British stage farce and television situation comedy, with the apogee of both being Mike Leigh's *Abigail's Party* (1977) in which Beverly Moss (Alison Steadman) invites her neighbors for drinks and an uncomfortably formal get-together degenerates into a fearless exposé of the jealousy and spite that fuels the British class system.

In American cinema, meanwhile, the influence of Buñuel was clearly felt on Alfred Hitchcock. In his autobiographical *Mon dernier soupir* (My Last Breath, aka My Last Sigh[1]), Buñuel recounts a visit to director George Cukor's house:

> At one point during our conversation, we heard footsteps shuffling behind us, and when I turned around, there was Alfred Hitchcock, round and rosy cheeked, his arms held out in my direction. I'd never met him, but knew that he'd sung my praises from time to time. He sat down on the other side of me, and, one arm around my shoulders, he proceeded to talk nonstop about his wine cellar, his diet, and the amputated leg in *Tristana*. "Ah, that leg … that leg," he sighed, more than once. (1982: 195)

Peter Wollen describes Hitchcock, who had worked in Berlin in the 1920s and was explicitly influenced by German Expressionist cinema, as a "closet Surrealist" (1977: 17), whose appropriation of themes beloved of the Surrealists, such as voyeuristic obsession in *Rear Window* (1954), *l'amour fou* in *Vertigo* (1958) in which Saul Bass's celebrated credit sequence during which the film's title cuts across a woman's eye recalls *Un chien andalou* (see Evans and Santaolalla, 2004: 1–2), paranoia in *North by Northwest* (1959) and insanity in *Psycho* (1960), could be deciphered by reference to a Freudian-tainted iconography of color, water, blondes, and a boy's best friend, his mother. Barbara Creed pegs Hitchcock as "a great popular Surrealist whose surrealist style and subject matter is designed to entertain as well as unleash the power of the imagination through shock" (2006: 122). In this, the strength of Hitchcock's own influence trailing that of Buñuel is what makes David Lynch the most recognizably surrealist of contemporary filmmakers. Lynch's *Eraserhead* (1977) is the film that has come closest to replicating the tone and mood of a nightmare since *Un chien andalou*, but Lynch is less atheistic and more a hopeful believer in the power of transcendence, whose films still rework innately conservative genres in perverse ways. He pays explicit homage to Buñuel's doubling of his protagonists in *Cet obscur objet du désir* with *Lost Highway* (1997) in which Patricia Arquette plays the twin roles of a man's wife and his lover, while *Mulholland Drive* (2001) also engages in the mischievous doubling of characters and sees alternate worlds in a mysterious box that recalls that of *Un chien andalou, Belle de jour*, and, in its noirish overtones, the equally Buñuelian glowing briefcase in Robert Aldrich's *Kiss Me Deadly* (1955), which subsequently reappears in Quentin Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction* (1994). Moreover, the ostensibly straightforward narrative of Lynch's *The Straight Story* (1999) in which Alvin (Richard Farnsworth) makes an epic, pan-state pilgrimage by miniature tractor to see his ailing brother, reveals not so much an obeisance to linearity as it does an askew observance of small-town America that discovers amusement and sorrow in the Surrealism of the everyday.

Ideas are constantly recycled in the cinema, of course, which is why the evidence of obsessions, time shifts, and the doubling of characters is so scattered in World cinema as to foil any direct tracking of influence back to Buñuel. Nevertheless, there is a clear line of inquiry into the influence of Buñuel on contemporary horror films, which includes the terrifying examination of faith that is *Martyrs* (Pascal Laugier, 2008). In addition, analysis of the work of David Cronenberg, who essayed Freud in *A Dangerous Method* (2011), produces enough proof of body-horror and psychological upset to fuel a comparative thesis. Other recent American films brandishing Buñuelian conceits include *Groundhog Day* (Harold Ramis, 1993), in which weatherman Phil (Bill Murray) is trapped in the horror of an ordinary day that endlessly repeats itself in the manner or Buñuel's Crusoe, shipwrecked in time as well as space, for whom every day is the same as the one before it, and the nihilist and Nietzschean *Fight Club* (David Fincher, 1999), in which man and superman meet and compete inside the twisted psyche of

an office drudge. The influence of Buñuel is also strong on Richard Linklater, who once hosted a season dedicated to Buñuel as the "The Subversive in the Studio" for his Austin Film Society and whose *Slacker* (1991) is an anti-capitalist satire of digressive pilgrimage that may be appreciated as a palimpsest of Buñuel's *La Voie lactée.* Linklater's most explicit reference to the surrealist agitator is the refrain of the character labeled Hitchhiker Awaiting "True Call" (Charles Gunning) in *Slacker*, who proclaims, "I may live badly, but at least I don't have to work to do it!" – a belief that originates with Don Lope (Fernando Rey) in *Tristana:* "I say to hell with the work you have to do to earn a living! That kind of work does us no honour; all it does is fill up the bellies of the pigs who exploit us. […] I may live badly, but at least I don't have to work to do it!"

Furthermore, just as *Slacker* may be understood as a reworking of *La Voie lactée,* so Linklater's *SubUrbia* (1996) in which disgruntled youths spend all night unable to leave a street corner is one of *El ángel exterminador,* while in preproduction notes for his *Dazed and Confused* (1993), Linklater claims he "quickly had to learn to drop all references to *Los olvidados"* (Pierson, 1996: 196) so as not to alienate the major studios. Indeed, many of the films Linklater has directed bear affiliation with those of Buñuel, who summarized his own career in film when he wrote that:

> The thought that continues guiding me today is the same that guided me at the age of twenty-five. It is an idea of Engels. The artist describes authentic social relations with the object of destroying the conventional ideals of the bourgeois world and compelling the public to doubt the perennial existence of the established order. That is the meaning of all my films: to say time and time again, in case someone forgets or believes otherwise, that we do not live in the best of all possible worlds. I don't know what more I can do. (1982: 107)

As Linklater admits when pressed to consider his films from a Buñuelian perspective, "many of these are perverse subjects, when you talk about social strata and expectations" (Stone, 2013). Thus, even his *Before Sunrise* (1995) and *Before Sunset* (2004) have something of *Cet obscur objet du désir* about them in their emphasis on love as an irresistible force and their discussions of that which Evans describes in relation to Buñuel's final films as "a prevalent aura of anguish, the reflection in the microcosm of the wider *inquiétude* that governs the world" (2006: 47, emphasis in original).

In contemporary European cinema, Buñuel exerts an influence on Michael Haneke's concern with the European middle classes and how they (should be made to?) suffer for their sins in films such as *Funny Games* (1997), *La pianiste* (The Piano Teacher, 2001), and *Caché* (Hidden, 2005). At the same time, Gaspar Noé's tortuous and traumatic *Irreversible* (2002) and *Enter The Void* (2009) reveal the influence of Buñuel in the way they deliver penance but withhold transcendence, revealing life as an unremitting, cyclical ordeal. Yet, the influence of Buñuel is not always represented by nightmare, for there are also the episodic, dreamlike

films of the Swede Roy Andersson, whose *Songs from the Second Floor* (2000) and *You, the Living* (2007) are unreal, unworldly and unlike anything else in World cinema, except, of course, the films of Buñuel. And there is his influence on Japanese cinema too, where critics and satirists of the rigid, hierarchical society there discovered common ground in the rebellion against social strictures in the films of Buñuel. Hiroshi Teshigahara, for example, has debunked the magic realist critique of Surrealism as purely "manufactured" in *Otoshiana* (Pitfall, 1962) and *Suna no onna* (Woman of the Dunes, 1964), a strange and erotic masterpiece in which an entomologist is trapped into living with a woman who struggles to prevent her home from being consumed by encroaching sand dunes.

In sum, the influence of Buñuel, whether pronounced and imitative or subtle and filtered through myriad features by other directors, remains a touchstone for those who commonly "viewed with distrust any attempt to tame the eye" (Matthews, 1971: 13). Whether malignant or mirthful, this influence should be recognized, respected, and celebrated, even when the tables are turned by the arch American satirist Woody Allen, who wanted Buñuel to play himself as the expert he pulls out of the cinema queue to confound a know-all in *Annie Hall* (1977) but had to make do with Marshall McLuhan instead. In the amiable comedy of manners and time shifts that is Allen's *Midnight in Paris* (2011), Allen's alter ego Gil (Owen Wilson) is a well-to-do "Hollywood hack who never gave real literature a shot" holidaying in Paris, whose midnight rendezvous with an antique taxi transports him back to the 1920s and encounters with Ernest Hemingway, Gertrude Stein, Dalí, and, of course, Buñuel. Once over his astonishment, Gil is not beyond vainly exploiting those he meets, haggling over prices for newly painted masterpieces and confounding Buñuel (Adrien de Van) with "his" idea for a film about guests at a dinner party who cannot leave a room. Buñuel is perplexed by this notional plot of *El ángel exterminador*: "But why can't they leave? I don't understand." "Don't worry," Allen has Gil respond, "you'll get it. Like one day you'll be shaving and you'll just get it." Buñuel is left alone, muttering to himself: "… but why don't they just leave?" If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, then Allen stealing and giving back this idea as his own is a heartfelt and humorous monument to a filmmaker who would surely have relished the joke.

Discretion and Desire

In the influence of Surrealism on anarchists in general and the Situationist International movement in particular, Buñuel was relevant to the riots in Paris and elsewhere in 1968, which, in turn, reoriented him away from the bourgeois lifestyle that was close to claiming him. Thus, he once more rejected convention in the brief but venomous attack on the moribund fascist dictatorship in Spain



Figure 0.23 Buñuel directs Catherine Deneuve in *Tristana*. Courtesy of the Filmoteca Española.

that was the French/Spanish/Italian co-production *Tristana* (1970), which, like *Viridiana*, was banned by the Francoist authorities (Figures 0.23 and 0.24). Nevertheless, Buñuel settled into his seventies as a frequent inhabitant of Paris, the city that had once sponsored his apprenticeship and entry into the world of filmmaking and, as previously discussed, the surrealist movement led by Breton. An old dog perhaps, but if his bark was now worse than his bite, it remained loud enough to shake up the establishment in sly satires such as the Oscar-winning *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie*, which resembles a luxurious palimpsest of *El ángel exterminador* for the European art-house, and *Le Fantôme de la liberté* (Figure 0.25). Entertaining and intriguing, these films revealed a sense of anarchy that was more amused than destructive, more lampoon than attack. At an age when most filmmakers would have descended into self-parody or obscurity, Buñuel was still chuckling at impropriety and more delighted than ever with his particular themes and cinematic fetishes, from the preponderance of feet to the erotic potential of food, the ridiculing of national stereotypes, the smart parodies of Franco-Spanish relations, the misshapen metaphors of animalistic behavior, the secret sinfulness of much Catholic ceremony and the moral corruption of those who claim to uphold dogma and personify its regime in their



Figure 0.24 Buñuel at work on *Tristana*. Courtesy of the Filmoteca Española.



Figure 0.25 Buñuel rehearses the fencing scene in *La Voie lactée*. Courtesy of the Filmoteca Española.



Figure 0.26 Buñuel directs Stéphane Audran in *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie*. Courtesy of the Filmoteca Española.

decorum and etiquette. Hence, he remained faithful to his belief in the fact that we do not live in the best possible world.

Indeed, this world in which his frustrated characters floundered was recognized by Deleuze as essentially realist; for he declared that only Buñuel, alongside Erich von Stroheim, was a master of naturalism in the cinema (Deleuze, 2005a: 129). According to Deleuze, Buñuel's depiction of the social milieu in *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* rendered it a "primordial location" to the extent that "never has the milieu been described with so much violence or cruelty, with its dual social division 'poor-rich', 'good men-evildoers'" (Deleuze, 2005a: 130). (See Figure 0.26.) Deleuze thus diagnosed the explicit degradation of the human species in the cinema of Buñuel and, moreover, concluded that this was "conceived less as accelerated entropy than as a precipitating repetition" that was triggered by ordered impulses from fetishized objects (Deleuze, 2005a: 131). This left Buñuel's audience in a state of constant uncertainty and unable to reach any difference in the cycle that might save them, unlike the aforementioned exception of Robinson Crusoe, who did. Moreover, it is in this last period of creativity from Buñuel that Deleuze, following Jean-Claude Bonnet, notes a change in the regime of dream or fantasy in his films that is "less a question of a state of the imaginary than of a deepening of the problem of time" (Deleuze, 2005b: 99). Thus, the deployment of two very different actresses (Carole Bouquet and

Ángela Molina) to play the same role in *Cet obscur objet du désir* is not a jape or a fantasy but a fact. As Deleuze contends:

> It is as if Buñuel's naturalist cosmology, based on the cycle and the succession of cycles, gives way to a plurality of simultaneous worlds; to a simultaneity of presents in different worlds. These are not subjective (imaginary) points of view in one and the same world, but one and the same event in different objective worlds, all implicated in the event, inexplicable universe. (Deleuze, 2005b: 100)

Reflection upon the conjunction of such ordinariness and phenomena is also central to Deleuze's seminal study of the "time-image" (2005b), in which he suggests that the cinematic "time-image" seems to suspend the logic of cause and effect which links actions in time, pointing to moments within a film in which the flow of movement seems to be interrupted, thereby foregrounding the film's self-conscious theoretical dimension (Godard and Ishaghpour, 2005: vii). Such a break of movement, which produces the emergence of the "time-image" allows for the possibility of aesthetic, ethical, and political transcendence, as the time-image opens up on to another series of linkages by affecting and transforming our perceptual and cognitive experience (Walsh, 2004: 200). As Deleuze puts it: "The 'time-image' does not imply the absence of movement, but it implies the reversal of subordination; time is not longer subordinated to movement, it is movement that is subordinated to time" (2005b: 260). Rob Stone explains that "the time-image is a vehicle for a changing, incomplete consciousness that in a Bergsonian sense expresses something like a moral response that is temporalized and in a constant state of becoming" (Stone, 2011: 44). From this perspective, if the "time-image" becomes detached from the ideological structure underpinning the narrative of the film, this *Companion* explores how Buñuel's cinema can function as a Deleuzian theoretical text that articulates a self-affirmative and emancipatory identity and subjectivity at a micro-political level as a way of offering a ferocious critique of the hegemonic, bourgeois ideology into which his cinema was inserted at a macro-political level.

Buñuel would direct his last fierce attack, *Cet obscur objet du désir,* at the age of 77. Although increasingly fragile and hindered by his deafness, his vicious yet affirmative discourse on the failings and frustrations of an ageing man (Fernando Rey), whose clumsy seduction of the young woman played by two actresses leads him to confront the base and disrespectful cravings of his desire, was also Buñuel at his most resolute. He retired thereafter and, with the help of Carrière, wrote his magical and untrustworthy autobiography *Mon dernier soupir,* which was published in 1982 and which provides an account of key episodes in his life, descriptions of his friends and family, bemusing outlines of dreams, and an array of encounters with numerous artists and filmmakers as well as memories of student pranks, family matters, and filming. Luis Buñuel Portolés died in Mexico City on July 29, 1983, an exile and, as Bunuel himself admitted, thanks to God an atheist to the end (Figure 0.27).



Figure 0.27 Buñuel at home in Mexico City. Courtesy of the Filmoteca Española.

And in the Spring

The importance of Buñuel is in flux. Celebrations, honorary conferences, screenings, and inaugurations worldwide have attempted to claim him and his films as the property of various museums, critical theories, or social movements. He would have resisted them all; and yet his films can still be revisited in compelling and innovative ways, as the chapters that follow demonstrate. Indeed, they arguably signify the unjust appropriation of the man by the respectable elements of society; for, in response, this volume has the aim of making him disrespectful and irreverent once again, thereby returning to the uncompromising nature of Surrealism that moves in the direction of being incorporated into pre-established critical models and into the establishment and yet, in a more compelling fashion, veers in the direction of a non-assimilated space that is associated with an ongoing questioning of our human existence and subversion of hegemonic ideological positions. Accordingly, his was a "criminal" life of exile and protest that was characterized by his refusal to betray his beliefs even when it meant that the existentialist within him was struggling to situate such disparate events as the Spanish Civil War and his own popular success in relation to his own ideas and philosophy (Figure 0.28).

Consequently, it is the aim of the contributors to correct that misjudged distance and bring Buñuel back into focus as the mischievous, exciting, and increasingly relevant filmmaker that he truly is. Thus, although the most common



Figure 0.28 Early portrait of Buñuel. Courtesy of the Filmoteca Española.

theoretical frameworks for appraising his work include baroque and Golden Age art and literature in Spain, neorealism and the generic conventions of melodrama, Freudian psychology, the schema of Surrealism, the codified narratives of the cinema of dissent under Franco, and the prevalence of debased Surrealism in contemporary culture, this volume draws in new readings and approximations. The aim, for example, is not just to see how Buñuel's films stand up to the theories of Deleuze, but also test if Deleuze's ideas survive contact with Buñuel. Our objective is to move beyond the interpretative and epistemological limitations that are imposed when one simply "applies" theory to cinematic practices. In particular, many of our contributors explore the possibility of thinking of Buñuel's cinema itself as a kind of theoretical text (Bal, 1999), by opening it up to a reflection on the cognitive and phenomenological demands that his films' aesthetic and political possibilities produce in us as spectators. This epistemological and interpretive shift enhances the content of his films by moving between a focus on their textual signification and on how the spectator may experience the film as a more porous space between cinema and practice. In other words, the cinema of Buñuel seems to produce what Griselda Pollock terms "seeds of theory" although it is, paradoxically, at the very moment of "applying" those seeds of theory to his films that the cinematic work itself disappears (Pollock, 1996: 82) (Figure 0.29).

As a result, in order to take the temperature of contemporary film studies by using the films of Buñuel as volatile thermometers, a wide selection of contributors

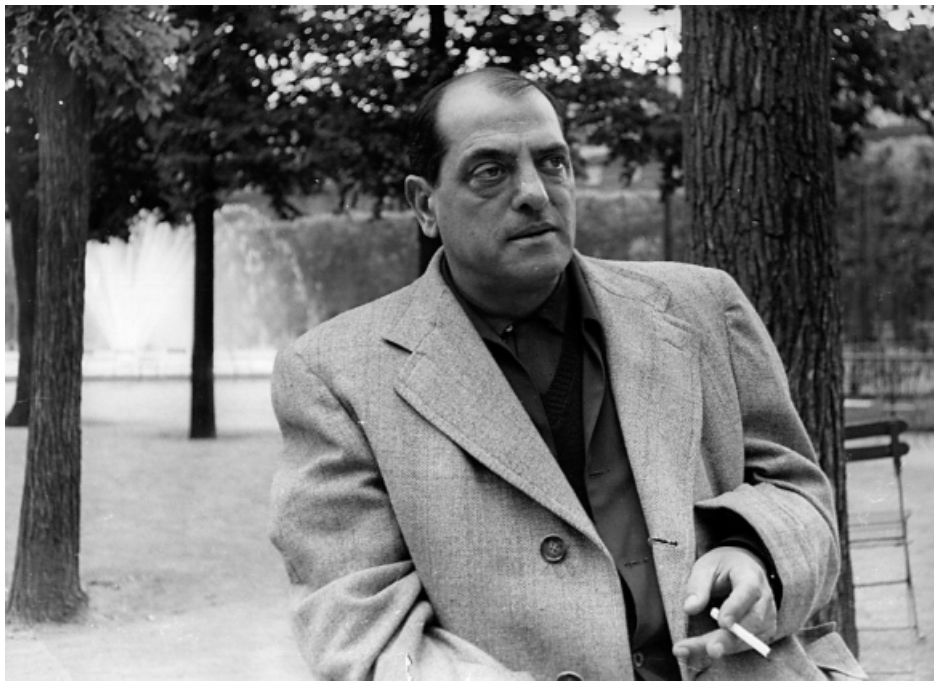


Figure 0.29 Portrait of Luis Buñuel. Courtesy of the Filmoteca Española.

was sought that extends from scholars in the United States and the United Kingdom to those in France and Spain. This selection also purposely ranges from the most revered experts to several new emerging scholars of exceptional promise. Several key themes emerged: the "time-image," as theorized by Deleuze, was a concern of many, as was space in relation to movement, sexual behavior, and narrative. Buñuel's practice of adaptation inspires several contributors, as did the stars he employed or was given to work with. There are also a number of intertextual readings that see his work in comparison to the likes of Lewis Carroll, Hiroshi Teshigahara, and Michael Haneke, thereby exploring the endless and multidirectional possibilities of rereading and reinterpreting his cinema in relation to its intertextual and intermedial relationship with other films and cultural practices. Some chapters rely on archival research, or provide the reader with a historical analysis of the contribution of Buñuel to Spanish, French, or Mexican cinema, while other chapters tend to offer original textual, theoretical, or historical analyses of the selected films by Buñuel. Still other chapters foreground their critical and theoretical tools by engaging with the films, as well as with the conceptual implications underpinning the critical and theoretical methodologies adopted by the particular contributor.

Instead of looking for consistency or demanding congenial approaches, the editors have deliberately put together a combination of heterogeneous and almost

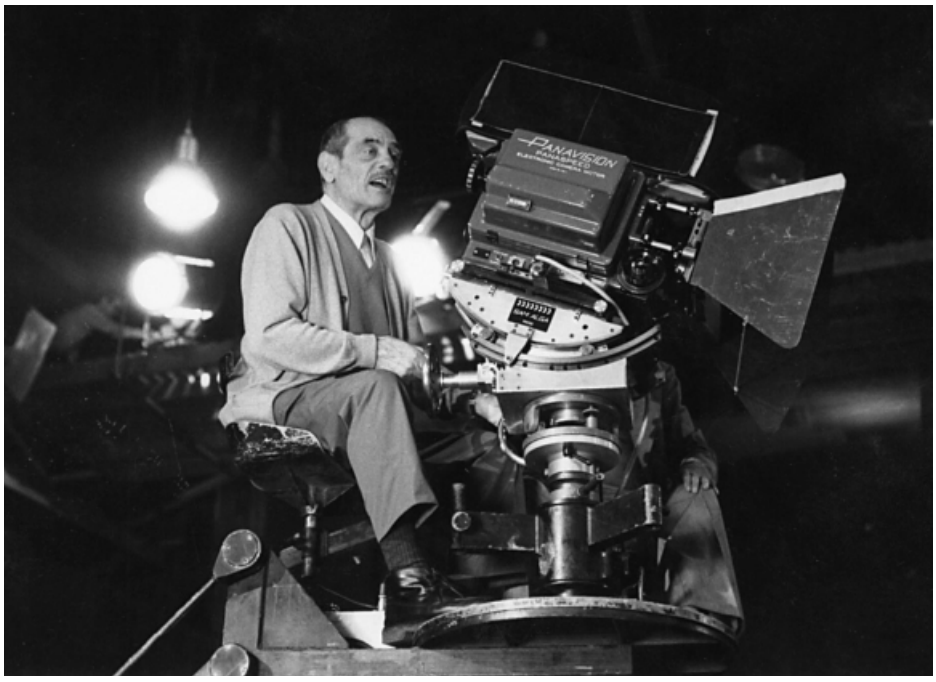


Figure 0.30 Buñuel at work. Courtesy of the Filmoteca Española.

mutually exclusive critical, conceptual, and methodological frameworks and perspectives that will contribute to the volume's formulation of a shift in historical, critical, and theoretical perspectives on the cinema of Buñuel. The book clusters the chapters under seven sections that correspond to the biographical subheadings that the reader has already encountered above. Yet these biographical divisions are by no means prescriptive and the reader will find issues that resonate throughout the volume and, doubtlessly, contradictions between chapters and even disagreements between the writers of this introduction and the authors they have corralled for the Companion. Nevertheless, what unites all contributors is the belief that, unlike Crusoe, Buñuel be left alone on his tiny desert island with its 360-degree view of the rest of the world, for it is the uniqueness of this vision that concerns us (Figure 0.30).

While this introduction attempts to offer an analysis of the ubiquity of Buñuel in Spanish, European, and World cinema, its authors wish to underscore that our introduction, and our *Companion* itself, should be understood as a point of departure. Indeed, by executing several omissions, whether in terms of covering all of Buñuel's films, or the variety of critical approaches that Buñuel's cinema invites, or in terms of not referring to all the extensive, if not exhaustive, scholarship on this filmmaker, we invite readers to detect our omissions and correct or fill out our partial, critical interpretations of a cinema that is always in the process

of becoming. Finally, if the cinema of Buñuel keeps challenging the institutional power, representational modes, and subjectivity of the hegemonic bourgeois society, it is the ethical implications of his cinema with which we shall end this introduction. In other words, neither offering us redemptive or complete condemnatory views of the world in which we live and, paradoxically, making us critically aware of the illness of our society, the cinema of Buñuel seems to invite us to reflect on the transformative ethical potential of subjectivity, thereby pushing us beyond ourselves, closer to other worlds and to others while maintaining their irreducible forms of being in the world. Hence, instead of considering Buñuel's films as a kind of political tract, we can think of his ever present and ever future cinema as inviting us to make, perhaps, political choices. Recalling and reversing Buñuel's oft-quoted epigram, we thank Buñuel not God for aesthetically transforming our perception, as well as our critical awareness and our ethical views of living in what he has convinced us, time and time again, is clearly not the best of all possible worlds.

Contents of This Volume

If this volume is organized to some extent chronologically, this structure paradoxically and purposely collapses from within. In other words, although to a large extent the editors have placed the chapters that follow according to the films that they examine, some chapters may also refer to earlier or later films by Buñuel or may engage with thematic, critical, and theoretical issues that resonate with other chapters placed in a different section within the volume. As a result, the organization of this volume itself self-reflexively points to the way in which Buñuel's cinema constantly pushes us into different, opposing directions, thus preventing us from reducing the meaning of his cinema to a single point of view or fixed position.

We begin the volume with a conversation between Buñuel's son, Juan Luis Buñuel, and Rob Stone. This previously unpublished interview took place in Paris in 2001 and it ranges over many aspects of family life and memories of travels between Mexico, France, the United States, and Spain. The discussion also explores the working practice experienced by Juan Luis, who was production assistant on several of his father's films. Yet the talk is also intimate and reflective, focusing on remembrances of a father as much as of a filmmaker. What emerges most clearly is the emotional regard that Buñuel held for his close friends and collaborators and at least a few of his films. At the same time, this attempt at uncovering the private face of a public figure sees memory and myth becoming noticeably interchangeable as intimate recollections overlap with oft-quoted anecdotes. Nevertheless, the portrait of Buñuel that emerges as a jocular prankster and eternal worrier is at least an affectionate preliminary sketch of our

"criminal" that reveals a less formal and perhaps no less familiar character at work and play behind the profound humanity, humor, and horror of his works.

Thereafter, in Part One – "An Aragonese Dog" – Julie Jones examine the practices Buñuel developed over the course of his professional trajectory to advance his projects, rescue and then further his career and to create a public image that would draw attention to his films – at least those he considered worthwhile – yet shelter his personal life. This examination of the director's discourse is related to autobiography studies, in the more recent acceptance of autobiography as including a wide variety of self-referential texts – letters, interviews, publicity stunts, film reviews, films, press statements, employment applications, and memoirs – and it shows the director defining himself according to the exigencies of the moment as well as his inner needs, themselves subject to change, for self-expression at the same time that he tirelessly voiced his aversion to any form of publicity.

Guy Wood and Javier Herrera remind us that Buñuel was a well-known firearms enthusiast and avid gun collector who used these "obscure objects of his desire" to shoot 29 of his films. However, their role in the formation of his character, creativity, and cinematography has gone practically unnoticed. Wood and Herrera elucidate the origins of this "strange passion" and the evolvement of his early mastery of the pyrotechnical gunplay he utilized throughout his career in his first two films: *Un chien andalou* and *L'Âge d'or.*

Following this, Mieke Bal pays attention to the way in which Buñuel's cinematic work has been qualified as exilic and transnational. While these qualifiers are obviously right, there is a third affiliated concept, "migratory aesthetics," that Bal finds useful to explore through the films in order to distinguish between these concepts. Migratory aesthetics is primarily a descriptor for contemporary Western societies. In this sense, using it to understand Buñuel's work is a willful anachronism or a case of "pre-posterous history." Trying to circumvent the indications of the films by nationality or period – surrealist, Spanish, Mexican, French – Bal seeks to bind the aesthetic – transnational and migratory – to formal properties. Bal focuses on a few examples of sound discrepancies and incomplete tracking shots as two flags of migratory aesthetics.

In Part Two – "A Golden Age" – Sarah Cooper focuses on Buñuel's contention with the concept of the soul, as theorized in early French film theory, from Impressionism to Surrealism, and as manifested through his signal collaboration with Dalí: *Un chien andalou*. Early French film theory, especially the first avant-garde of Impressionism, abounds with mention of the soul. While the term is far less abundant in the second wave of the avant-garde that is aligned with Surrealism, the French surrealist film theorists were still broadly in tune with the use of a concept of the soul as an all-encompassing term of reference for thinking and feeling, as was Buñuel himself who did not just focus on the surrealist breach of rationality in mental terms alone. There is, however, a nuance that emerges in the transition from impressionist to surrealist theory, and this, coupled with Buñuel's own sense of the soul, suggests that it does not just pertain to the possibilities of capturing

the inner life when mobilized in the context of film. Indeed, seemingly in tacit agreement with Béla Balázs's observations in *Der sichtbare Mensch,* then rather than taking us only into the image and into psychological depth, the soul – thinking and feeling – resides on the surface of the film. In *Un chien andalou* this surface becomes an important locus of intellect and emotion, and of a generative reading of processes that extend beyond a Freudian approach to psychic life to look outward as well as inward, to breach subjectivity and open it up through the very in-depth activity of probing its inner processes.

Ramona Fotiade uses Deleuzian film theory in order to explore Bunuel's sustained engagement with surrealist visual aesthetics and his experimental use of shot transitions, *mise en scène*, and montage beginning with the late 1920s, that can be said to prefigure the advent of the "time-image" while highlighting his proximity to Breton's conception of beauty as "fixed-explosive." Buñuel's use of still images and slow motion, of pictorial motifs and *tableaux vivants* is examined in light of Roland Barthes's theory of photography in *Camera Lucida* and compared to Tarkovsky's similar rendition of dream sequences and unconscious memories in order to arrive at a reassessment of the surrealist conception of the cinematic marvelous as "crystal-image."

Agustín Sánchez Vidal's chapter focuses on Buñuel's and Dalí's collaboration on the screenplay for *L'Âge d'or* in 1930, whose shooting, release, and subsequent scandal deepened personal and ideological differences between the filmmaker and the painter. After describing these external circumstances of the film, Sánchez Vidal analyzes the film's free use of space, time, and narrative. Also, Sánchez Vidal focuses on the use of religious iconography, the asynchronous sound, voice-overs, advertising, and raccords in montage to express the Freudian deep psyche mode or that of the Marquis de Sade. Such alteration of the conventions is enhanced by the disruptive elements of the collage and its subsequent estrangement, offering the unusual as the everyday and the everyday as the unusual. Such displacements oblige us to consider the question of whether – apart from *Un chien andalou* and *L'Âge d'or* – there was ever a surrealist cinema. Or if this was not, rather, a highly unstable and volatile product, only made possible by the passing combination in 1929 and 1930 of two personalities as unrepeatable as Buñuel and Dalí.

To end this section, Tom Conley argues in his chapter that everywhere Buñuel's cinema exploits perspectivism, which, inherited from Nietzsche, is understood here to be a visual process that makes little distinction between things infinite and things infinitesimal. Buñuel's ostensive fascination with insects is related to the way the films construct their geographies. The consequence is that by mixing topography (study of the traits and virtues of local spaces) and geography (study of the world in a cosmological order) the films collapse a distinction basic to Ptolemy and to spatial reason in general. The study works with Buñuel's early film theory before engaging comparative study of sequences from *Las Hurdes* and *Robinson Crusoe.*

In Part Three – "The Forgotten One" – Erica Segre rethinks the well-known ocularcentricity in Buñuel's films in relation to his work in Mexico and traces its impact on the poeticization of dislocated vision, intermedial dialogue, and the dismantling of totalizing perspectives witnessed in literature, photography, and the visual arts. Segre considers both his specific collaborations with film and artist photographers such as Gabriel Figueroa, Agustín Jiménez, and Manuel Álvarez Bravo as well as the less-studied interaction with the scenographer and abstract artist (with surrealist affiliation) Gunther Gerzso. Segre conceptualizes the visual strategies developed in response to Buñuel's directorial practice and deliberate impurities to unhinge the tyranny of social realism and facile populism in Mexican visual culture. She analyzes in unprecedented detail the diffuse influence that the slicing of the eye had on the experimental arts providing a metavisual discourse that combined reflexivity with a dramatization of monocular obsession and single-eyed nationalism. The transposition of ritual blinding from screen to the varied locales and styles of image-making in Mexico from the pictorial (Agustín Lazo, Julio Castellanos, Frida Kahlo, Guillermo Meza, Carlos Orozco Romero, Olga Costa, Manuel González Serrano) to new photojournalism (Nacho López and Héctor García) is charted through four sections that interrelate Buñuel's ocular and directorial paradigms in films such as *Los olvidados, Él, El bruto,* and *Ensayo de un crimen* with the expansion of interdisciplinary visuality in post-revolutionary Mexico.

Tom Whittaker focuses on Buñuel's Mexican comedies, *El gran calavera, Subida al cielo,* and *La ilusión viaja en tranvía,* to argue that characters and objects find themselves frequently both out of place and out of synch with the social worlds they inhabit. As a cultural wanderer, who found himself working within the Mexican studio system in the late 1940s and 1950s, Buñuel's status was similarly one of spatial and temporal dislocation. Whittaker proceeds to examine how Buñuel's art of transgression can be seen as one of motion, both literal and metaphorical. More specifically, he shows how the trope of movement within the immediate social and historical context of Mexico's miracle years – a period of accelerated modernization, migration, and deregulation – acquires particular symbolic weight in the films. Through the writing of Rosi Braidotti and Michel de Certeau, Whittaker examines how movement and rhythm are orchestrated in the frame in the films. In doing so, he shows how Buñuel's social comedies throw light on the social and geographical contradictions of a country caught in the grip of modernization.

María Pilar Rodríguez focuses on Buñuel's 1950 Mexican film *Susana* to explore the artistic value of the film by drawing on the theory of melodrama and identifying certain surrealistic elements that are present in the film's structure and composition. She contends that the film's particular use of melodramatic techniques to arouse emotion is combined with typical surrealist elements frequently employed by Buñuel, resulting in an artistic original product characterized by the interaction of such elements. Although it is a film Buñuel was commissioned to make, and it

is usually considered a minor and even disappointing contribution to his work, Rodríguez argues that Buñuel succeeds in invigorating melodrama with a disruptive approach which reveals the hidden contradictions of the Mexican patriarchal society and underscores the capacity for questioning the limitations of the permissible and acceptable.

This part ends with Ana Moraña, who examines Buñuel's *Los olvidados* in order to discuss two fundamental aspects of the film. First, Moraña analyzes the film's ideological and formal peculiarity as a foundational production, which situates it among the most important films in the history of cinema (beyond its national context). Second, Moraña highlights the film's position as a precursor to the cinema of violence and urban marginalization, a formal category that has been abundantly popular in nearly every Latin American country in recent decades. It is noteworthy that, in current scholarship on Buñuel and especially on *Los olvidados,* criticism on this theme is varied and abundant, but a reordering and revision that confronts it with other Latin American films helps to shed new light on Buñuel's film.

In Part Four – "Strange Passions" – Amparo Martínez Herranz reconstructs the creative process for *Robinson Crusoe* by analyzing the shooting script and other unpublished documents that allow for a profound investigation into the filmmakers' intentions. A co-production between Mexico and the United States, this film's genesis and development must be understood in the context of McCarthyism, its "witch hunts" and blacklisting. Although the project was initially a commission, it allowed Buñuel to rework themes and imagery that concerned him. In the writing of the script, for example, Buñuel and his collaborator aimed for a respectful adaptation of the details of Daniel Defoe's novel but with a different overall meaning. They managed to convert the time Crusoe spent on the desert island into an opportunity that prompted self-discovery in liberty from shaking off the social strictures and moral shackles that impeded freedom. Amongst other things, they changed the basic principles governing the co-habitation of Crusoe and Friday, replacing enslavement with brotherhood. Later, as Martínez Herranz explains, the shooting and editing of the film inspired further revisions that included Buñuel's decision to emphasize the power and potential of Nature, instinct, the desire for the feminine, the curse of solitude, and the individual in relation to divinity. By these means, *Robinson Crusoe* became one of Buñuel's few commercial successes and one of the greatest reimaginings of Defoe's myth.

Following this, Geoffrey Kantaris considers two representative films from Buñuel's Mexican cycle, *El bruto* and *Ensayo de un crimen,* examining their deployment of popular cinematic tropes and genres in relation to the social changes induced by the rapid urban modernization of the so-called Mexican miracle. Kantaris argues that, rather than seeing Buñuel as an auteur struggling against the limitations of Golden Age popular-commercial cinema, we should take seriously his use and framing of popular forms as a machinery of affect. Buñuel's films of this period intervene in the *Fort-Da* movement of affective flight and affective

capture by which the axiomatic of cinema itself (as a technology for the commodification of sentiment) becomes a major force of modernization allied to the deterritorializing effects of capital flows, migration flows, and rapid urban construction. Rather than focusing on the crisis of masculinity impelled by these processes (as is usually assumed for these films), Kantaris proposes that Buñuel engages the transformations in feminine sexuality, women's pushing against their (Oedipal) capture within patriarchal family structures, registered in popular film's fascination with "bad girls." Typically, however, Buñuel takes these processes to their final consequences, toward "unheard-of becomings" in the language of Deleuze and Guattari.

Sarah Leahy reminds us that much has been written on Buñuel's collaborations with major stars such as Catherine Deneuve, Silvia Pinal, and Fernando Rey. However, in the course of his career, Buñuel also worked with major stars on some films that have received very little critical attention, considered as they are as among his minor works. Notable among these is *La Mort en ce jardin,* featuring Simone Signoret, Georges Marchal, Charles Vanel, and – working with Buñuel for the first time – Michel Piccoli. This film can be seen as transitional between Buñuel's Mexican period and his return to filmmaking in Europe in the 1960s. Leahy takes the explicit theme of exile in *La Mort en ce jardin* as a starting point for considering how Buñuel – a director in exile – makes use of these French stars in an ostensibly French film shot in the Mexican jungle, and considers how the film negotiates a complex set of tensions between exilic and national cinemas.

Ernesto Acevedo-Muñoz explores how Buñuel's trio of French-language films made in the 1950s (generally, between *Robinson Crusoe* and *Viridiana*) are often neglected by critics and pose a potential challenge of contextualization. Neither Mexican nor European, yet all co-productions, these three films are examples of Buñuel's earnest attempts (after the relative success of *Los olvidados* and *Robinson Crusoe*) to find his way back into the European film circles where he had initially made his mark with *Un chien andalou* and *L'Âge d'or*. Acevedo-Muñoz puts these three films in the context of Buñuel's *oeuvre*, understanding their narrative and formal logic in relation to Buñuel's Mexican films as well as the canonical films by which he became better known in the last third of his career, from *Viridiana* to *Cet obscur objet du désir.* Tracing connections to previous and contemporary films, and pointing to anticipations of other films and characters that Buñuel would later perfect, *Cela s'appelle l'aurore, La Mort en ce jardin,* and *La Fièvre monte à El Pao* constitute Buñuel's most overtly political films (in terms of settings, plots, and characters). Imperfect and occasionally maladroit, these three films place characters in environments and situations (geographical or political) that they cannot fully understand or control, and makes them face moral dilemmas where loyalties and convictions are questioned, tested, but never satisfactorily resolved.

This part ends with Sherry Velasco, who reminds us that critics have noted, and Buñuel himself has recognized, the indelible mark of Spain's medieval and early modern literature and culture on the famous director's cinematic vision. Many if

not most of his films (and autobiographical anecdotes) are imbued with stories and images that have traces to medieval saints and heretics, picaresque characters or itineraries, quixotic endeavors, and madness, as well as the Golden Age honor plays and other narratives that explore the impact of chastity and fidelity on social, religious, economic, and psychological conditions. What scholars have not considered, according to Velasco, is whether and how Buñuel's own remarkable body of work might help us rethink Spain's literary heritage. Given the ubiquitous echoes of this heritage on Buñuel's cinematic *oeuvre*, Velasco asks whether a closer reading of Buñuel's films might enlighten and energize our reading of canonical and lesser known medieval and Golden Age texts. Revisiting the impact of medieval conventions such as the *restitutio virginitatis* (hymen mending) or other variations of genital mutilation after considering scenes from Buñuel's films *Él* and *Cet obscur objet du désir* and these films' obsessive interest in sewn-up female genitals, Velasco has arrived at a more multifocal understanding of the social, religious, and economic enterprises invested in both prohibiting and promoting these female-phobic practices during the Middle Ages and early modern period.

In Part Five – "An Exterminating Angel" – Sally Faulkner identifies the Galdós intertext in *Viridiana*. Acknowledging the multiple intertextual influences on Buñuel from music, painting, and psychoanalysis, Faulkner makes the case for the urgent addition to this list of the novels of Spanish nineteenth-century Realist writer Benito Pérez Galdós. After surveying critical approaches to Buñuel's literary adaptations, which tend to rely on an auteurist perspective to defend the superiority of the films, Faulkner draws on adaptation theory to formulate an approach that reads Buñuel through Galdós and Galdós through Buñuel, a process she terms "mutual illumination." What emerges is a Buñuel sensitive to Galdós's studies of gender, voyeurism, materiality, the body, and narrative self-reflexivity, aspects that recent Galdós criticism is also beginning to uncover in the author.

Kate Griffiths focuses on Buñuel's *Le Journal d'une femme de chambre,* an adaptation of Octave Mirbeau's turn-of-the-century novel of the same name, to see it as a work haunted in word and image. Principal amongst the film's ghosts is the specter of its source text, a novel whose gritty focus on the harsh social realities faced by a chambermaid as she moves from household to household is unexpectedly peopled by a series of metaphorical specters. Buñuel's film not only adapts many of the specters in Mirbeau's novel, it also engages with the spectrality of its own cinematic act, with the ghosts innate to adaptation. Her chapter considers the way in which the film renders absent the source text which it simultaneously brings to cinematic life. If Buñuel conceives of adaptation as a haunted act, his *Le Journal d'une femme de chambre* revels in its own spectrality on a variety of other levels. Buñuel allows the phantomatic images of his life, identity, and output to whisper through the film. Specific scenes are teasingly peopled by the spectral memories of its actors' previous roles and by the ghostly presence of the necessarily absent viewer. The film provides something of a useful case study for the theorists of intertextual relations who themselves make use of the imagery of

haunting. For Harold Bloom, writers are, all too often, forced to wrestle with and silence the voices of earlier great writers to find their own presence, voice, and literary being. Buñuel's *Le Journal d'une femme de chambre* offers a different approach to textual relations. Far from trying to silence the host of whispering ghostly voices which influence and feed into it, the film encourages such voices to speak and be heard. Ghosts, in this film, bring neither anxiety nor peril; rather, they are the key to artistic life.

Libby Saxton argues that the supernatural miracles that appear to occur in a number of Buñuel's films have generally been interpreted as signaling a concern with the inexplicable or the non-rational. Saxton draws attention instead to the ways in which these depictions of thaumaturgy are linked to what they might initially seem diametrically to oppose: machines and, more broadly, the realms of science and reason. Saxton begins by examining some of the different connections between miracles and technology that have been made in discussions of early cinema, surrealist writings, and poststructuralist assessments of religion in the digital era. Saxton then considers how *Simón del desierto* and *La Voie lactée,* Buñuel's two most probing treatments of the miracle theme, might be situated in relation to these approaches. She argues that Buñuel's meta-discursive explorations of cinema as thaumaturgy question the traditional opposition between the supernatural and the mechanical, pre-empting deconstructive accounts of religion as inextricably bound up with technology, science and the media.

To end this part, Marsha Kinder explores the interplay between the room and the road in Buñuel's narrative experimentation, and the way repetition is mobilized to reveal the inherent paradoxes within these two narrative tropes. Both tropes suggest connections to other narrative forms. The room and its compression of space is the basic structure of theatre, while the expansive road is the driving force of the epic, the novel, the road movie, and all other forms of picaresque fiction. Avoiding Aristotle's hierarchy of genres, Buñuel opts for dialectics, adapting both literary forms to cinema, while leveraging the distinctions between them. Yet, these two lines of experimentation – with the room and the road, with the compression and expansion of narrative space – do not function as a binary. Rather, it is the dialectic interplay between them that intrigues Buñuel; for it generates an array of diverse combinations that are not restricted to any particular cultural context (France, Spain, or Mexico), historical period (from the 1920s to the 1970s), or production regime (avant-garde, commercial industry, or European art film). They recur across his entire canon, which proved convenient for one who spent most of his life working in exile.

In Part Six – "Discretion and Desire" – Sheldon Penn offers a close reading of *La Voie lactée* and *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* with reference to Deleuze's concept of the "time-image." Deleuze argues that, whilst Buñuel was a chief exponent of the "impulse image" (a category of the movement-image), his later films present a non-cyclical view of time that potentially aligns him with the time-image of "modern" cinema. Rather than attempting to prove or disprove that hypothesis,

Penn examines movement in these two late films, arguing that they perform a parody of the "normal" movement that Deleuze identifies as intrinsic to the movement-image. Penn is therefore arguing for the presence of a "soft," transitional time-image and a "type" of cinema that inhabits ground in the division between the "movement-image" and the "time-image." In the course of this study, Penn illustrates how both films present an excess of "normal" cinematic movement and, in the process, encourage skepticism in the spectator causing an eruption of the time-image. Penn's analysis of parodic movement in the films draws attention to the role of the *flâneur,* Benjamin's peripatetic spectator and re-processor of modernity. Although the figure of the *flâneur* has been invoked in connection with the director and his protagonists, Penn offers the first sustained study of the theme. He concludes that, rather than dialecticians of modernity, Buñuel's pseudo-*flâneurs* are functions of aberrant movement and vital components of his particular brand of "time-image."

Arnaud Duprat de Montero argues that in *Belle de jour,* where Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking-glass* (1872) show through in intertextual fashion, Buñuel turns toward a literary work which is seen as important by the surrealist movement. Insofar as Séverine, upon deciding to become a prostitute, goes "through the looking-glass" like Alice, to arrive in a world which is the opposite of her own, her approach is presented as a quest for identity which involves confrontation and free access to her subconscious. This quest also necessitates a degree of reflection upon the pertinence of dividing events between the real and the imaginary. In Buñuel's world, this involves dynamiting the meanings of the cinematic codes utilized, which is a reference to Surrealism. Nevertheless, because of the reference to Alice, this phenomenon finds a meaning by fitting into Séverine's initiatory journey and appears to constitute a subversion of Surrealism, a pessimistic assessment of the movement's heritage in the world of the 1960s.

Peter William Evans reminds us that Ángela Molina was one of two actresses to play Conchita in Buñuel's *Cet obscur objet du désir.* Evans' chapter is divided between an analysis of her performance in three key scenes and an interview that ranges over her memories of working on the film. The three scenes highlighted are her first appearance as Conchita, a meeting at her Paris flat with Mateo/Mathieu, and his humiliation when she makes love in front of him with "El Morenito" in the patio of the house newly bought for her in Seville. Molina comments on these and other scenes, offering fresh insights into one of the highlights of World cinema.

Cristina Moreiras-Menor proposes a reflection on the representation of historicity (that is, the traces and images of history in contemporary cinema) from presuppositions *other* than those available to historiography. Drawing on the three last films by Buñuel, *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie, Le Fantôme de la liberté,* and *Cet obscur objet du désir,* Moreiras takes on representing time (the index of history, the record of social events, and the constitution of modernizing processes) from a broader,

more dynamic vantage point. In Buñuel's films, the past operates as one of numerous vertices through which time acquires meaning and, more importantly, transforms the relation between historical moments. As a result, one of Moreiras' objectives is to make the present emerge as *the* moment of historical experience capable of restoring value to the past: after all, it is *from* the present, as Benjamin reminds us, that the past is experienced.

To conclude this part, Wendy Everett argues that the disruptive, challenging narratives of many of Buñuel's films are deliberately ambiguous and unpredictable and resist coherent interpretation and linear readings. Focusing, in particular, on his penultimate film, *Le Fantôme de la liberté,* Everett explores the insights which can be gained by situating Buñuel's work within the context of postmodern, fractal cinema: a narrative form structured as a series of multiple, open-ended stories which randomly intersect in non-hierarchical, multi-temporal spaces. Schrödinger's cat and the parallel realities of quantum mechanics are addressed as part of a study which demonstrates that Buñuel's cinema questions and reformulates the nature of cinematic representation itself.

In the final section, Part Seven – "And in the Spring" – Paul Begin observes that the basic components of contemporary horror cinema and its subgenres can be found in Buñuel's early surrealist cinema, namely *Un chien andalou* and *L'Âge d'or.* In the case of the so-called torture porn subgenre, which includes films such as *Hostel* (Eli Roth, 2005) and *Wolf Creek* (Greg McLean, 2005), the special effects are technically superior and the limits have been pushed significantly in terms of specific sadistic acts, yet the same penchant for mutilation, murder, and misogyny that is found in contemporary horror cinema is preceded by Buñuel's early cinema, raising the question: Is it surrealist violence or torture porn? Begin responds by examining issues such as the cinematic structure of horror cinema and Buñuel's cinema alike, their treatment of the body, the conflation between sex and violence, and, finally, context, in order to situate Buñuel's legacy of violence vis-à-vis contemporary horror film.

Following this, Jimmy Hay recognizes that much academic and critical writing on Buñuel's *Belle de jour* has provided psychoanalytical readings of the film and the sexual behavior of Séverine (Catherine Deneuve); yet, while informed by these texts, he reconsiders female sexuality in *Belle de jour* by approaching it as existing in direct relation to interior and exterior space. To do so Hay utilizes Deleuze's theories on masochism in order to explore the relationship between space and transgressive sexual behavior, considering what role outside space, in contrast to inside space, plays in portraying Séverine's sexual activities as attempts to transcend claustrophobic physical and social boundaries. Moreover, by considering Henri Lefebvre's theory of social space being a constructed, produced entity, Hay reveals how *Belle de jour* subverts and challenges the class, social status, and gender of certain spaces through sexual acts and behavior. Furthermore, Hay identifies the legacy of Buñuel's treatment of the bourgeoisie and sexuality in contemporary European cinema by effecting a comparative analysis of *Belle de jour* with Michael

Haneke's *La Pianiste* (The Piano Teacher, 2001); an intriguing companion with regards to its treatment of space and sexual behavior. Ultimately, Hay explores the traversal and occupation of space as a way of transgressing social and gender boundaries.

Another productive comparison of Buñuel's cinema with other national cinemas is Felicity Gee's chapter in which she argues that Buñuel advocated a new realism in cinema, a new and unconventional way of seeing the everyday world that was both socially critical and marvelous and irrational. Buñuel's definition of cinematic reality adopts a surrealist view that considers the exterior object world as an expansive, psychologically invested space where an object as simple as an ordinary glass can be "a thousand different things." This metamorphosis in perception involves a reconfiguring, or a reimagining of everyday reality that is inherent in surrealist practice, but is also a fundamental component of both the art historical and literary strains of magic realism. Confusingly, these two movements are often used interchangeably, particularly when describing films that juxtapose fantastic or marvelous elements with political or ethnographic context. However, Gee notes that Buñuel's particular visual modernism is marked by his political standpoint as well as an experimental approach to revealing the absurd depths of reality. His approach was to have a wide-ranging influence on subsequent filmmakers, one of whom was Japanese director Hiroshi Teshigahara. Through an examination of Buñuel's *Los olvidados,* Gee explores how common themes and stylistic innovations can be traced in Teshigahara's "fantasy-documentary" *Otoshiana* (Pitfall, 1962). Drawing on Fredric Jameson's work on cinematic magic realism, Gee discusses how each director's consideration of a "usable" historical past is built from stark images of the mundane and quotidian, and metamorphoses into strange and magical cinematic worlds that are synchronously real and surreal. Gee poses the question as to whether the unresolved tension at the heart of both Buñuel and Teshigahara's work can contribute to a better understanding of the relationship between Surrealism and magic realism.

The volume closes with Susan McCabe's comparison of Buñuel with Maya Deren. In her chapter, McCabe creates a bridge between the earlier and later periods of avant-garde surrealist film, and crossing from Europe to America, through a number of texts, but primarily through Buñuel's *El ángel exterminador* and Maya Deren's *Meshes of the Afternoon* (1942). McCabe focuses on the two touchstone films to explore a surrealist legacy, juxtaposing Deren's more aestheticized interior "quest" and trance film to Buñuel's incorporation of his own early surrealist methods into a considerably more narrative, social film than his famed work on the surrealist icon, *Un chien andalou*. Both films, shot in predominantly closed settings, home in on windows, stairs, archways, enclosures – and subsequent ruptures to these tropes. As Deren uses the materiality of film to mythologize recursive memory in spatial experiments, Buñuel simultaneously mythologizes and desacralizes objects and humans in *El ángel exterminador.* McCabe considers Deren's modernist enactment of time as layered and cyclical,

and her aesthetic rebellion against Hollywood film in dialogue with Buñuel, his influence (direct and indirect), thus creating a new space to consider a spectator's relationship to the "meshes" of a complex cultural imaginary. She draws upon Freud's theory of group psychology to connect Buñuel and Deren to their mutual belief in film's power to engender a "mythopoetics" and visual hypnotic field; at the same time, Benjamin's ambivalence to Surrealism along with his historical materialism, itself envisioned in filmic terms, help distinguish Buñuel and Deren's break with teleological history and narrative – and their break with an often fetishized "future" expressed in the representation of Surrealism as an anarchic, experimental movement.

To sum up, the rich variety of critical and theoretical approaches adopted in these chapters will allow readers to find points of connection and disconnection throughout the volume, helping us to see Buñuel's cinema as a space of potential transformation that may allow us to move beyond the psychic and social phobias and limitations that dominate the structures sustaining our coexistence with others. Buñuel teaches us that we are constantly in a shifting process between connecting with and disconnecting from ourselves, others, and the world, without completely being traumatically disconnected or immobilized by, or reduced in, the total connection. Hence, as the chapters that follow demonstrate, Buñuel's cinema contributes to a rethinking of a political subjectivity that does not succumb entirely to, and nor does it remain totally outside, the seductions of the dominant bourgeois ideology, which is predicated on psychic and social phobias and appropriative desires that are necessary for the continuation of its hegemonic power.

Note

1 Due to the multiple versions of this book, references appear in this volume to all three titles depending on the version referenced by contributors. Main index entry is to *My Last Sigh*.

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Part One

An Aragonese Dog

1

Interview with Juan Luis Buñuel

Rob Stone

"I had a long talk with my cousin, Dr. Pedro Cristián García Buñuel, who lives in Zaragoza …" The letter had come in response to a vague attempt to secure permission to reproduce a still from *Un chien andalou* (An Andalusian Dog, 1929). Turning the page revealed the signature: Juan Luis Buñuel. The missive continued:

> We've been discussing all the events of the past year – awards, symposiums, festivals, etc. ad infinitum on my father. We discussed what he would have thought of all this … (he wouldn't have liked it). It's like one big recuperation of his work by the official elements of society. As he once told me, "Now that I'm famous, they're naming streets after me … a few years ago … they would have had me shot!'
>
> So this is the conclusion we've come to: we would like the words ME CAGO EN DIOS (I shit on God) to come out, one way or another in the book.
>
> For example: "Luis Buñuel was a very discreet man. He never said 'me cago en Dios' in front of nuns or children."
>
> Or: On the shoot of *La Voie lactée*, one early morning, he was heard exclaiming, as he bumped his head getting out of a car, "me cago en Dios!" He said it to himself … a quite common Aragonese expression.
>
> It could appear in a small footnote, at the end of the book, or better yet, on the front cover. Up to you. Maybe it'll shock the Protestant ethic or politically correct readers. Too bad.

Duly cited, correspondence ensued, resulting in a previously unpublished interview at the home of Juan Luis Buñuel (b.1934) in Paris in 2001.

What is your first memory of your father?
My first memory of life and him is when I was barely three years old and I was sitting on his knee by an open window and he was shooting an air pistol at the leaves on a tree. He was teaching me to shoot. That is my first memory.

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You moved home a lot when you were a child, didn't you?
Yes, and then when we lived in California we'd always go out to the desert and be looking under rocks for insects and spiders. But kids don't like to move. You lose all your friends and have to make new ones. Each time, New York, Los Angeles, Mexico; each time I lost all my friends.

Where was your father happiest?
He liked New York. But he was happiest in Madrid because in Madrid he could go visit his family in Zaragoza. He liked Paris too; Los Angeles less. At the end he wanted to move to Lausanne, where nothing happens. My mother didn't want that. But my mother had lost all her family by this time and had all her friends in Mexico.

What was family life like?
He was always strict but always *cariñoso* (affectionate). But always very worried about his kids. That's what made life difficult sometimes, his fear that something would happen to us.

Were his parents strict with him?
They had servants. He always said his mother didn't know where the children's rooms were.



Figure 1.1 Family portrait: (left to right) Rafael, Jeanne, Juan Luis and Luis Buñuel. Courtesy of the Filmoteca Española.

What were his parents like?
His father was a humorous man, constantly joking. His mother was from Calanda and her father was a *boticario* (chemist). She was completely Semitic Arabic and his father was like a Swede with big grey eyes and almost blond.

What do you remember about growing up in Mexico?
My memories of Mexico and New York are of when all his friends would come over and at suppertime we would eat and then at ten, eleven, twelve o'clock we would sit around and talk. [Imitating his father] *"Por el frente de Teruel …"* (On the Teruel frontline …). Discussions, always. Always. Whatever country we were in, they'd get together these guys and have these discussions. It was quite a shock for them, being in exile, they needed to try and understand it.

What did exile mean for your father?
We were in Mexico. He didn't like Mexico, but where else could he go?

In your mother's book she writes about the house in Mexico becoming a Spain from Spain.
Yes, he built it with an architect from the Residencia [University in Madrid]. It's not a nice house. There are only two bathrooms and my father's bathroom is so narrow that if you want to wash your face you have to stand sideways. But in



Figure 1.2 The house on Felix Cuevas, Mexico City. Courtesy of the Filmoteca Española.



Figure 1.3 The living room of the house on Felix Cuevas. Courtesy of the Filmoteca Española.

Mexico, if you have a little bit of money, first you have all the servants you want, and we always had very nice ladies to help my mother. So life was fine, but he would make very little money. For *Los olvidados* he was paid one thousand or two thousand dollars and nothing else. He had to make one or two films a year to just survive. He'd make two films a year that barely covered costs and then he had a little more money so he built the house on Felix Cuevas [street], which is just brick, nothing fancy, but it was always full of friends. When I went to college, he had enough to pay for my college fees and that was it.

You went to a religious school, didn't you?
Yes, I went to a religious school in Los Angeles. The American school system was so bad they said, "Well, let's try a Catholic school." My whole class did their first communion and so I went along with my class and the priest said, "Well, tomorrow you're going to get the body of Christ and before you come to church tomorrow get your fathers to give you a blessing." So I tripped up to my father in my white suit for his blessing and he picked me up and said, "If you tell my friends about this, I'll kill you." I didn't understand, but okay, I said I wouldn't tell anyone.

It must have been difficult for him to send you to a Catholic school.
Well, he appreciated the discipline of the Jesuits. He said, "They taught me discipline and all that but don't believe a word of the religious part." Sometimes he'd be at the house and I'd come in and, you know at the end of *Tristana*, where

he's sitting round with priests and having chocolate? I'd come in and see my father sitting there with four priests and he'd be telling them, *"Christo era un majadero"* (Christ was a fool). And he'd just play with them.

Were you conscious of being in exile?
I remember when I graduated high school in Mexico and I wanted to go study in America and the American Council called me in and they had this big FBI file on my father. "In 1926 your father went to a meeting of the Left wing …" "But I wasn't born yet!" "In 1933 …" "I wasn't born in 1933!" "In 1936 …" "I was two years old!" On and on. And some years later someone sent me the FBI file and most of it was deleted.

This file would have been produced in collaboration with Spanish authorities?
Probably. And here too in France. Because he had problems everywhere. He had problems here when *L'Âge d'or* came out. And Salvador Dalí was also a son of a bitch.

Your father never forgave Dalí, did he?
No, he didn't. No one who says it's good that Federico García Lorca got killed and that Franco won the war was going to keep his friends. Dalí had written many times to my father saying, "I have a great idea for a new film." But no, they never met again.

Your father didn't get on with Gala.
No, he told me once he tried to kill her. He jumped on her, was choking her and he told me that what he wanted was to see her tongue appear between her teeth.

Did he talk to you much about his time as a student in Madrid?
Yes. You know, they always look so serious in photographs, but they were fuck-offs, always laughing, always playing jokes on each other. People take him too seriously. I think he enjoyed laughing more than anything.

Did he ever talk to you about Lorca?
Yes, sometimes I'd see him sad and ask what's the matter? And he said, "I was thinking of Lorca, his finesse, and thinking of when they were making him walk, him knowing that they were going to shoot him, it makes me so sad." But my father was strange. He'd say, "I never knew Lorca was homosexual." And once he was furious: "Federico, come here, they tell me you're a fag!" And then he said, "My god, it's true." He didn't know. But that didn't change his feelings towards him. Thanks to Federico his whole world opened up. My father was *un bruto* (a brute) from Aragón who liked to box. And Lorca opened up the world of poetry and music to him. But he didn't like Lorca's poetry very much. He always said the greatness of Lorca was himself, his personality, his *cariño* (affectionate nature), which was extraordinary.



Figure 1.4 Toledo. Courtesy of the Filmoteca Española.

Did he tell you many stories of his student days?
This one time we were in Toledo walking around and having drinks and it got late and we got way up to the top of Toledo and there was this balcony with the Tajo [river] way down below and he got sad and I said, "What's the matter?" And he said, "We used to come up here, Federico, Salvador and I … to vomit after we'd drunk too much. Just to see the vomit hit the Tajo. He said they'd drink a lot of cheap anise and then go to Mass and then confession stinking of anise and say, "Father, I want to join the order!" "Well," said the priest, "come back in a few hours."

Was he a good student?
Yes, he read constantly, constantly. He would read and reread. But the Belgian writer who writes detective stories, Georges Simenon, was his favorite. We had the whole collection of Simenon.

Wasn't he also a champion boxer?
No. He boxed but I think they hit him on the nose and he quit.

What else did he like?
He knew a lot about art but he didn't like paintings very much. He hated museums. I remember once we were in Madrid and bored and I said, "Let's go to the

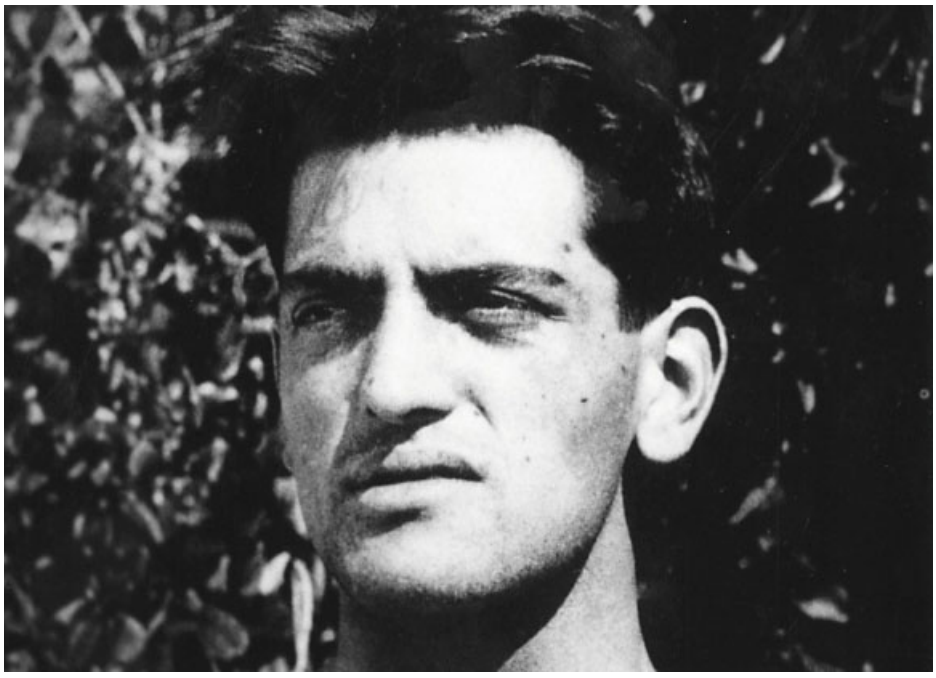


Figure 1.5 Luis Buñuel in his boxing days. Courtesy of the Filmoteca Española.

Prado [Museum]." "Bad idea," he said, "thirty years and I've never been to the Prado." But we went and we rushed to see *The Garden of Earthly Delights* by Hieronymous Bosch. *"Magnífico!"* he cried, *"Vámonos!"* (Magnificent! Let's go!). We went to a bar and that was that. He told me once he went to the Picasso museum here in Paris and he starts walking through it and then starts running and by the end he's running so fast he bursts through the door screaming and the museum people run after him and say, "What's the matter?" And he says "Ah, I'm bored shitless!" Really, the only paintings we had in the house [in Mexico] were because I insisted because the walls were so bleak. He didn't like paintings because spiders could hide behind paintings.

He didn't like spiders?
Oh, no. That's a family obsession. I have a cousin who sees a spider, he faints. Big guy.

And your father was the same?
Yes. The first time I went to Zaragoza, I was twenty-three and it was Christmas time and we had that night of Christmas dinner with the whole family and my cousin said, "Watch and see what happens at midnight, when you have cognac and sit around, just watch what happens." Two uncles, three aunts, all sitting around and one of my aunts says, "Guess what I saw yesterday?" "Yes, what was it?"



Figure 1.6 Buñuel with his sisters. Courtesy of the Filmoteca Española.

"A spider the size of a potato!" And then they'd all be talking about spiders for three hours. My cousin said, "Every Christmas time this happens. It's tradition."

But your father studied entomology, didn't he?
Yes, and he loved spiders. He was fascinated by them. Once in Mexico, I put a spider on the wall of the breakfast room. He'd get up at six, come down and have his coffee and I put this tiny little spider on the wall and at six-thirty: *"Qué nadie se mueva!"* (Nobody move!) Bang, crash, bang! Then he laughed. He saw it was a rubber one.

But in The Young One *he has the scene where the girl stamps on a tarantula. He must have hated filming that.*
Oh, he hated to kill any animal. Although, to be fair, he killed a lot of animals in his films. The first was in *Las Hurdes*, where he shoots the goat and people said, "Why did you shoot the goat?" Now goats fall and get killed. You can be with your camera waiting, but it can be ten or fifteen years. So you shoot a goat. Every day they kill goats for the market, so instead of cutting its throat you put a bullet through him. The wind was blowing this way so it blew the smoke across the camera. But anyway, they bought a goat set it up there and shot it.

They bought it? It wasn't a wild one?
No, wild goats don't let you get that close with the camera. He was honest. He just recreated the scene.

Do you think he would have liked to have fought in the Spanish Civil War?
No, I don't think so. I don't think he was physical in that sense. No, I don't think he would have been a soldier. That wasn't his strength. His strength was in other things. He got very nervous in May '68.

You were both here in Paris, yes? He writes in My Last Sigh *that he was worried about you. He says [director] Louis Malle gave you a gun and taught you to shoot it.*
Oh, I had guns. I still have guns. My whole family were gun-crazy. So we had seventy pistols. All my family had guns. My uncles, my cousins were all gun crazy. Maybe it comes from his father, who always had guns. And in '68 he knew that I had a .22 calibre pistol and he said, "The French army is coming in from the south, put up a barricade there and with your gun …" I said, "What, me against the French army tanks with a .22 calibre pistol? Where will you be?"

And where was he?
He was setting up a film, so he was in a hotel near here and he was very worried because he said it reminded him of things that happened in Spain with the anarchists and things. Then he went off with [producer Serge] Silberman. I think he went off to London or something. He didn't like the students with their Mao books chanting, "Mao! Mao! Mao!" He hated that.

Would he have preferred anarchy?
Yes, it was too conformist.

And he was concerned about terrorism?
Yes, completely. His last film ends with a terrorist explosion because that's where we were headed. We were heading into a period of terrorism. His last script was about terrorists who were going to set up an atom bomb and were going to blow up the Louvre.

Because he didn't like museums.
Exactly. And at the end, the atom bomb is hidden and the terrorist says, "You don't need us, you know, the developed world is going to blow itself up just fine without our help."

So what would he have thought of 9/11?
He would have been … it would have been a high moment of his life. He would have been terrorized by it, terrified by it, but he would have understood the reasons and everything behind it.

Where was he when Franco died?
He was in Mexico and he would have liked to have gone back to live in Spain then but my mother didn't. But he'd rest in Mexico and then go spend two or three months in Spain.

He must have been happy with the changes he saw there.
Yes, but he always said, *"Con los socialistas, cuidado!* (Careful with the Socialists!). They're treacherous." And they blew it. Look at what they had in Spain and they blew it. But the Republicans in Mexico all had their fingers worn down to a stub from hitting the table, shouting, *"Este año muere Franco!"* (This is the year that Franco dies!). They did that for forty years. My father used to get his communist friends angry by telling them that Franco had saved Spain. He'd say, "Suppose the Republic would have won. Hitler would have invaded France and would have invaded Spain too. The Americans would have come and bombarded Spain. Franco saved Spain."

Was he aware of his importance to Spanish filmmakers?
Yes, and he liked them all and treated them all well, especially [Carlos] Saura and [Juan Antonio] Bardem, the young guys. He'd smuggle copies of *Time* magazine into Spain for them. And he'd take them out and tell them stories and laugh. He'd take them to the Casa Botín in Madrid and if you go there, you go downstairs, and right to the left there's a little room that has two tables and that's where he'd sit because there was no echo. That was a problem for him, the echoes, because he

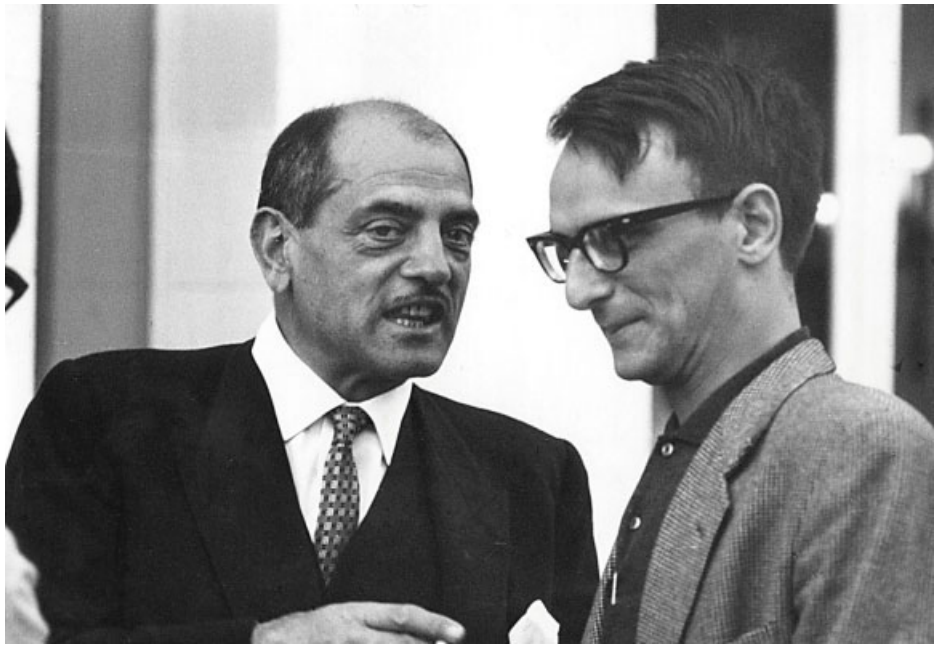


Figure 1.7 Buñuel with Carlos Saura. Courtesy of the Filmoteca Española.

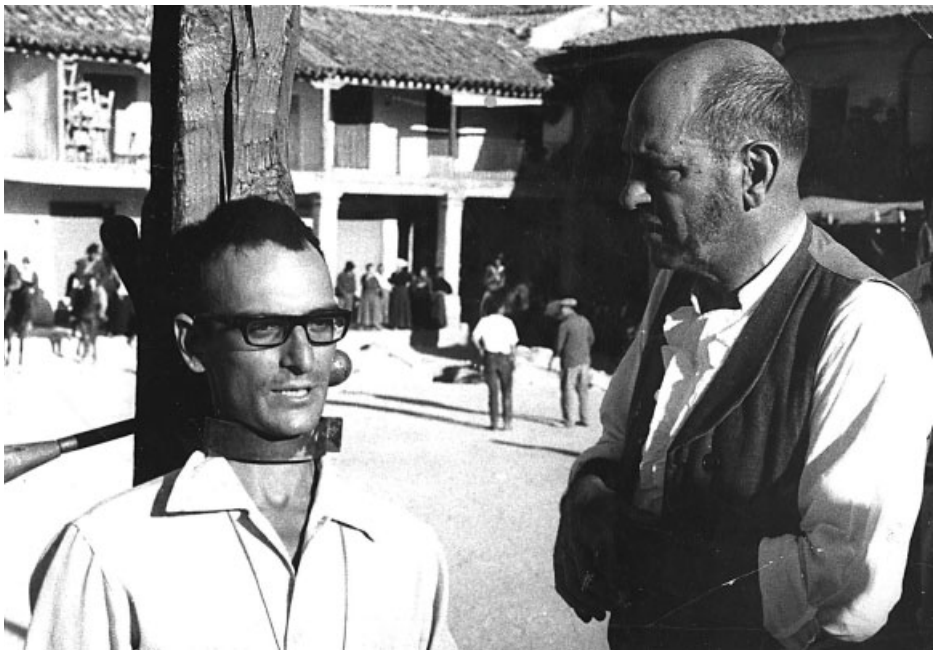


Figure 1.8 Buñuel playing the part of the executioner in Saura's *Llanto por un bandido* (1964) practices using the garrotte on his director. Courtesy of the Filmoteca Española.

was hard of hearing and they'd have to speak one at a time. He couldn't have two people speaking at the same time like everyone does in Spain. When everyone started talking at the same time he'd just turn off his hearing aid. His deafness was a problem probably from a pistol shot. Maybe his father fired a gun too close to his ear. And he'd never want to get operated on. He was scared of doctors.

When did you become aware of your father's reputation?
His bad reputation, because they wanted to kick us out of Mexico.

But nevertheless you began working with him?
I started working for him on a film he made with Gérard Phillipe and he needed an assistant who spoke French and Spanish and in France at that time there were no assistants who spoke Spanish so he took me on as his assistant. It was *La Fièvre monte à El Pao*. Bad film. Nobody wanted to do it, but they had this contract with a studio so they did it. It's a bad film.

Which of his films did he like and was most pleased with?
Él. He said in his first two films he'd said everything he had to say. He'd say the rest is just repetition on a theme and variations. So he liked his first two films. And *Él*. And *Robinson Crusoe* he liked, the man alone in the jungle. The ones he made in France, Silberman pushed him into doing those films. He didn't want to do them anymore.



Figure 1.9 Juan Luis Buñuel (top right) working with Luis Buñuel (on camera). Courtesy of the Filmoteca Española.

Did your father read much of what was written about him?
"Qué barbaridad de tontos!" (What a bunch of idiots!), he'd say. But if there was a good critic, a guy who analyzed a film well, he would say *"Qué interesante!"* (How interesting!) and in fact it would show him things, if it was done creatively. For me there are only three books that did it well. There's his book, *My Last Sigh*, my mother's book, and the Pérez Turrent and de la Colina book is good because they just sat around a table and talked and talked.

What comes through all those interviews is how amused your father was at all the interpretations of his films.
Yes. He's all, *"No sé, no sé, quizás"* (I don't know, I don't know, maybe). I remember for *The Exterminating Angel*, it won a prize in Cannes and I was there so I did the press conference. And the press were, "And what does this mean?" "Well, it doesn't mean anything. My father says it doesn't mean anything." And there was one British critic, who said, "But it means this and I don't care what your father says!" And then the film was sold in the United States and the distributor said please write us a short piece saying what it means. And I remember my father sitting over the typewriter getting exasperated: "Bah, I don't know what it means!"

Did he really not know what it means?
What it means was … what he told me it means was: he hated crowds. He hated being in a room with a lot of people. The idea of being in a crowded room, he absolutely hated. And he saw the horror in this. You know the painting *The Raft of the Medusa* by Gericault? That was the idea he had. Only to make a film of that was expensive, so he said, "Alright, what's cheap? A room! Right, okay. Now they can't get out of the room. Why? It's not important; they just can't get out." Now, once you get over that, then what do they do, and the rest is beautiful. And horrific. And funny.

He didn't like being interviewed either, did he?
Well, that was all the "who and how and where and why" and it bored him. He did one interview in Toledo with a Frenchman, very intellectual, and he started saying *barbaridades* (terrible things) about the French. And this man told him, "Most French people, if you say Toledo they think it's a brand of motorcycle; but you, you love Toledo, don't you?" "Not at all," said my father, "I can't stand it. I hate it." And then they didn't know what to do. It depended on his mood. Sometimes he would have fun. But what are you going to talk about? Henry Miller writing is not interesting. What's interesting is what he wrote.

How did your father deal with his reputation?
People didn't recognize him. He wore these dark glasses. Once he went to St Germain and he had grown a beard for some reason, and he went into a store to buy a hat and he said the man was looking at him with a smile, and he bought the hat and the man said, "Thank you, Mr Hemingway." He was very happy with that.

Wasn't he interested in the critical response to his films?
Well, it worried him. If a film was too well acclaimed it worried him. "Did I do something wrong?" He wasn't very happy with, "Wow, he's a genius!" Silberman set it up so he would be up for the Oscar for best foreign language film for *Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*. The press came and my father said: "Well, I've paid out over forty thousand dollars to the members of the Oscar jury so they should be happy." Bam! – big scandal in the newspapers. And the film did win. And so the newspapers came back and my father said, "You see, the Americans are very honest. They accept the fact that I gave them this money." Bam! – big scandal again.

Did he ever go to Cannes?
Yes. But Cannes was different. He could see old friends. He loved sitting in a café and just liked being with old friends.

He wasn't there for Viridiana, *was he?*
No, he had this dizzy sickness so he had gone back to Mexico. But I was. The censor was going to block it, but I quickly got hold of the negatives. And [the bullfighter Miguel] Dominguín had this friend, another bullfighter called Pedrete, who



Figure 1.10 Buñuel (second left) in Cannes with Arturo Ripstein (right), Sofía Infante and Gustavo Alatriste (left). Courtesy of the Filmoteca Española.

was going to France, so I flew to Barcelona with the negatives and put them in the back of this van, put all the capes and swords and everything on top of the cans and then we drove out through the frontier and the Guardia Civil just said, "*Suerte, torero*!" (Good luck, bullfighter!) and we got to France and I took the negatives on the train to Paris and we made a copy and that was the copy that played in Cannes.

Where it won the prize.
Yes, where it won the prize. It couldn't represent Spain officially but the organizer of the festival had invited it personally. And it wins the prize as an invited film. Not Mexican, not Spanish. And the organizer said, "We'll give the prize to the minister of culture from Spain." And I said, "No! Give it to Silvia Pinal, she's here. Or me, I'm here. Give it to anybody but not to this minister." And he said, "Oh, it's too late, it will create uproar." So the guy from the ministry went up, very happy, got sacked; but maybe it's good that he did.

You were assistant director on Viridiana. *What was the experience of shooting it in Spain like?*
Good. He was with friends. He was with Fernando Rey and Silvia [Pinal]. And a lot of the beggars were guys he'd known in 1936. They were great comics, stand-up comics from the music hall.

Were you controlled at all during the shoot?
No, we had complete freedom. He would get up at five in the morning and work out the day's schedule. He'd learnt to shoot that way from working in Mexico. Very exact. He'd cut the film together and get an hour and thirty-five minutes. Then he'd cut out the clapperboards and it would be an hour and half. Finished! He'd base the film on his ass. I mean, if his ass started hurting the film was too long.

And there's very little added, nothing extra, very little music.
No, he didn't like music. He felt it was cheating. Unless it's in the shot, you know, someone puts a record on, which happens in *Viridiana*.

But wasn't this a difficult time, because he was accused by friends in Mexico of betraying them?
Yes, but he just wanted to go back to Spain *con toda la mala leche que podía* (with all the anger and spite he could muster).

And ten years later he comes back to Spain to make Tristana.
Yes. Franco's minister of culture at the time [Manuel] Fraga Iribarne invited him.

Even after the scandal over Viridiana?
It seems Franco saw *Viridiana* and thought it wasn't up to much.



Figure 1.11 Filming Tristana with Serge Silberman (left) and José Luis Barros (right). Courtesy of the Filmoteca Española.

Why did your father go back?
My father enjoyed going back. He could go to Zaragoza on weekends to visit his family, his mother was still alive. But he was furious working on *Tristana*. He had this Panavision camera and he took it to Toledo where the streets are so narrow he couldn't use it. But I think he liked *Tristana*. It was based on his sister. They used to play this game when they were kids. She'd take two beans and tell him to choose one. "But they're both the same." "Choose one!" "This one." "Why did you choose it?" And so on. The whole theme of *Tristana* was that.

Chance?
Yes, chance and *mala leche* (mischievous spite).

Could you describe his working practice?
Well, the idea for a film was usually his but he would work with [Jean Claude] Carrière or whoever the script writer was at the time and it was the writer who would write everything and then the next day he would correct it.

So did he speak his thoughts and the writer would take notes?
Yes, but what he needed more than anything else was a wall to bounce the ball against. And it was important to have a good wall, someone who could criticize, tell him, "Oh, that's not good." "Why not?" "Well, because …" They went to a hot spa a couple of hours from Mexico City, you know, a big hotel with swimming pools in the desert. And they would go there out of tourist season and be the only ones there except for weekends and the way they would work was they'd have breakfast at seven, then each one would go in their room to work or work out, go swimming, take long walks and all that and then they'd meet for the *aperitif*. That was very important. And that's where they would come up with an idea or a story or a thought that had to do or not to do with the script. The important thing was to have something original every day to say. It could have nothing to do with what they were working on. But they'd talk about it, have lunch, *la siesta*, and then they'd get in one of their rooms and then they'd start working, acting out the scenes, writing them down.

So his style of working really didn't change much since the very first time of working with Dalí?
No. What he told me about Dalí was that if one of them didn't like the idea the other could dismiss it.

Was it the same with Carrière?
Oh yes, always. And in fact, when he started work with Carrière, Carrière was a young writer and sort of scared. He agreed all the time and my father had to go to Silberman and say, "You know, he agrees all the time." So Silberman had to take Carrière aside and say, "Disagree with him. Even if you agree, disagree with him so he has something to work off."

Did your father need a target when writing, something to aim his satire at?
Yes, he'd always attack something. There was a tremendous censor in Mexico at that period, for example, that was terrible. You couldn't show a Mexican with sandals, you know. I remember one script my father had and this group goes into a typical Mexican village made of adobe, which is a good material, and the censor said, "No, there are no Mexican villages made of adobe, it's *denigrante* (degrading)." He almost got kicked out of Mexico with *Los olvidados*.

Did your father enjoy making films?
No. I don't think so. What he enjoyed was when it was easy. When he was in the studio, he liked that. And when he had his friends around him, [Michel] Piccoli and Fernando Rey and others like that, and then they would be laughing constantly. And in France you start at noon, you work late, because a lot of his actors were in the theatre, so you work from noon to seven-thirty and then the actor goes to his theatre. So we'd have lunch always at eleven-thirty and start shooting at noon, and around five-thirty he'd say, "Alright, now we'll change and shoot it this way." And that meant change all the lights in the studio, which means half an hour and in that half an hour we'd all rush, well the chosen few, the two assistants, my father, Fernando Rey, we'd go to one of the rooms and there'd be wine and *salchicha* and *salchichón* and so on.



Figure 1.12 Juan Luis Buñuel, Fernando Rey and Luis Buñuel. Courtesy of the Filmoteca Española.

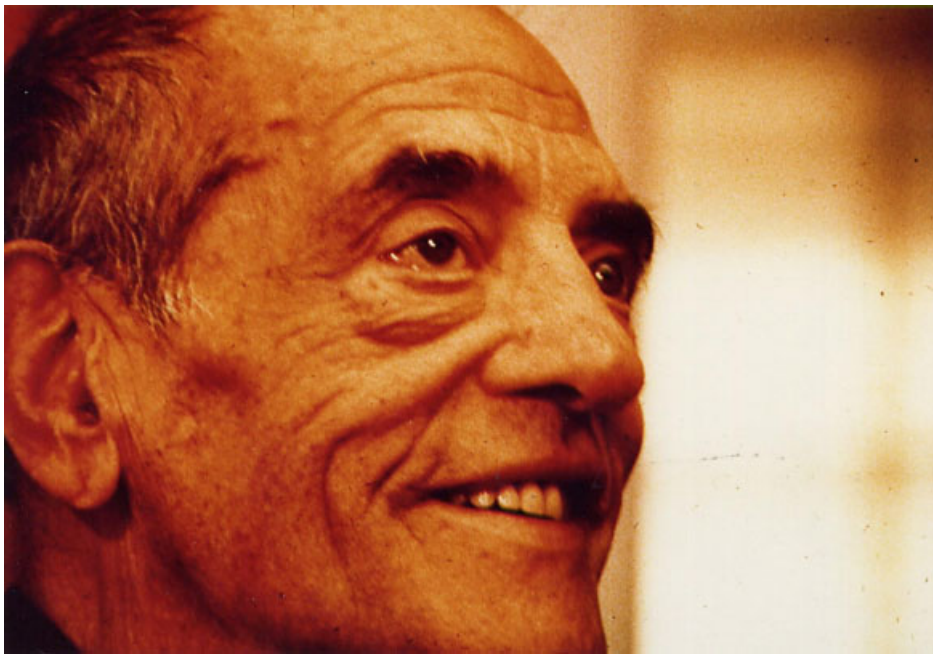


Figure 1.13 Luis Buñuel. Courtesy of the Filmoteca Española.

It sounds like a very civilized way of working.
Yes, it was. And I remember when we made *Diary of a Chambermaid*, I would pick him up to take him out to the shoot and it was winter and the car would get all dirty and when we got out there he was looking at my car and I left him, and we were setting up the day's shoot and someone said, "Where's the director?" And the director was washing my car. No pretension. He liked clean things. His car in Mexico he kept washed, his room was impeccable.

Was he interested in his films when they were finished?
Oh, he'd tell the producer, "Burn it."

What did you learn from working with your father?
We did one scene in *That Obscure Object of Desire* where it's Fernando Rey in this bar and they walk out of the bar and on the screen you just see these two guys walk out, but it took us like four hours. And on the screen it's nothing. Like Picasso, he would go like this and draw a beautiful woman. Ah, the years of things that all go into making that one moment!

2

Luis Buñuel and the Politics of Self-Presentation

Julie Jones

Luis Buñuel, who never tired of emphasizing his distaste for interviews, detachment from the commercial fortunes of his films, and indifference to awards, became skilled early on at promoting his work and projecting an image of himself that would help publicize that work while simultaneously providing a screen behind which the private – in fact, very private – person could hide. This capacity served him well in a career that was nearly derailed by exile and long immersion in a Third World movie industry protective of its native sons. In this chapter, I will examine the practices developed over the course of his career to advance his projects, rescue and then further his career and to create a public image that would draw attention to his films – at least those he considered worthwhile – yet shelter his personal life. This examination of the director's discourse is related to autobiography studies, in the more recent acceptance of autobiography as including a wide variety of self-referential texts – letters, interviews, publicity stunts, film reviews, films, press statements, employment applications, and memoirs – and it will show the director defining himself according to the exigencies of the moment as well as his needs, themselves subject to change, for self-expression.

Buñuel was catapulted to fame in 1929 by *Un chien andalou* (An Andalusian Dog), which established his public image in a particularly memorable way as a young man who strops a straight razor and then slits a woman's eye. This ferocity would characterize the director's public persona for years to come and become one of the hallmarks of a Buñuel film, although it was, at best, an only partial representation of the man, who was also a sentimentalist and a "discreet" bourgeois.

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Early Days

It was, however, a persona that Buñuel had been cultivating for some time: in his reviews and essays for the film pages of *Cahiers d'art* and *La gaceta literaria*, in interviews, in his *ciné-club* presentations, in his experimental writings and, especially, in the cruel letter in which he and Salvador Dalí excoriate the work of Spain's leading poet Juan Ramón Jiménez, a missive that was intended to cause a ruckus and generate publicity.

The ploy worked. Ernesto Giménez Caballero, writing in *La gaceta literaria*, hails Buñuel and Dalí as "parricides," anxious to kill off their artistic forebears in order to make room for their own work (Sánchez Vidal, 1988: 192). Buñuel's choice of career would give him an edge his writer friends did not enjoy; film was the art form of the future. The Spanish press emphasized his modern sensibility, his fiery youth, even his athleticism, itself a mark of the modern. One interviewer pictures him jumping from literature to film with "the agile legs of a runner" (AB).[1]

Buñuel's sometimes thuggish tendencies coincided admirably with the Surrealists' exploitation of the joys of aggression. In his memoirs, the director writes that what first impressed him about the group was a famous dust-up at the Closerie de Lilas which left the café in ruins. This combination of scandal and physical violence, used to arouse what the group saw as a somnolent public, could not fail to appeal to a man who was himself prone to outbursts of rage (Buñuel, 1982: 122).

Attracted too by Surrealism's determination to convey the irrational, a desire which rhymed well with his own needs for self-expression, Buñuel became increasingly interested in the movement (1982: 122). He also spotted there an opening for his peculiar talents: despite their strong showing in literature and art, none of the Surrealists seemed to grasp the huge potential of film as a medium for their kind of expression. Along with Dalí, he decided to crack André Breton's magic circle by creating what would be considered the first surrealist film. Such an entrée, they hoped, would help sell Dalí's paintings in Paris and kick-start Buñuel's career as a director.

They were, then, anxious to extract the maximum of publicity for, and from, *Un chien andalou*. Even before finishing the screenplay, Buñuel gave two interviews, emphasizing the modernity and originality of the film: "it can't be classified. It has no precedent" (AB). A third interview formed the back cover of a special surrealist edition of *L'Amic de les Arts* that Dalí had timed to coincide with the film shoot. Here Buñuel answers a series of questions posed by the painter. In his usual pugnacious fashion, he attacks art as a "typhus" and European film, including Man Ray's supposedly surrealist endeavor *L'Étoile de mer* (The Starfish, 1928), as "artistic." The field, he makes clear, is open (AB).

The Man with the Knife: *Un chien andalou*

Buñuel and Dalí were eager to show what a real surrealist film could do. The opening scene of *Un chien andalou* would surpass the cruelty of the letter to Juan Ramón

Jiménez. Years later Buñuel told an interviewer: "Surrealism in film began when we asked ourselves, what can you do with 1,000 spectators but attack everything they value?" (Saint-Jean, 1974: 10). The approach worked; the Surrealists and the chic alike embraced the two Spaniards, and the film created a sensation in Paris.

Aware that the notoriety of *Un chien andalou* stemmed from its shock value and his own image of brutality, Buñuel made a point of insulting his fans: the journalists had sold out; the public was "imbecilic"; neither group knew which end was up (Gubern, 1999: 324), and he confided to an interviewer in Madrid that he had turned to film in search of a means of expression he had not found in literature or art, but if film let him down, he would take up a pistol (Gubern, 1999: 327). Clearly, Buñuel had gotten into his role.

Assault and Retreat: *L'Âge d'or* (The Golden Age, 1930)

His wild success, however, meant that he would have to abandon any idea of commercial projects. He had a reputation to defend, and from that point on, for the rest of his life, he would be very conscious of himself as the creator of a certain kind of film. His next work, again privately financed – this time by Vicomte Charles de Noailles – and written in conjunction with Dalí, would be, if anything, harder hitting than *Un chien andalou*, a remorseless attack on all the institutions that sustain society. In a 1930 piece for the *Heraldo de Aragón*, Buñuel assumes a defiant attitude, declaring with unintentional hilarity – he is, after all, giving an interview – that "I can't stand publicity." He proceeds, then, to insult the writer and feminist Rosa Chacel as "stupid" and Azorín, that icon of Spanish culture, as "an idiot," adding that if Azorín lived in Paris the Surrealists "would give him a good kicking." Hewing close to the company line, Buñuel insists that he is interested in film for its potential to foment social change. His declarations seem to have left the interviewer a little confused. Weighing the director's "idealism" and "humanism" against his ferocity, he makes his own pronouncement: his fellow countryman is a "hero" (AB).

With a little help from Dalí, Buñuel did make an heroic film: *L'Âge d'or* gives no quarter, and the furious figure of Gaston Modot – based very closely on Buñuel, as the director admitted (AB) – added another element to his self-projection: here he is not the cool clinician with a knife, but a man driven to violence by social and sexual frustration. Buñuel was less than heroic, however, when it came to facing up to the indignation the film was sure to incite: he took to his heels. By the time right-wing vandals smashed up the theatre and the government withdrew the film's authorization, he was in Hollywood on a six-month contract.

Buñuel's reasons for leaving Paris at a crucial point and for keeping quiet are not clear, but they may have had something to do with a facet of his personality that was definitely not a part of the persona: his timidity. Years later, when *Viridiana* (1961) was to be shown at Cannes as an official Spanish entry – and the source of another huge commotion – Buñuel made a point of staying behind in Paris and

warned his nephew, Francisco Aranda, to do the same (Aranda, 1969: 204). Whatever the explanation, he left Dalí to face the scandal on his own, and the painter would never forgive him. Nor would he forgive Buñuel for later attempts to deny his participation in *L'Âge d'or*.

Despite keeping quiet, Buñuel was anxious to do something with the film, which had been censored throughout Europe. Although he insisted in interviews that he never acceded to the demands of censorship (AB), he produced a 28-minute, bowdlerized version in the hope – illusory, as it turned out – that it would get past the censors and also with the notion – he had by this time joined the Spanish Communist Party[2] – that it might serve as propaganda. He did this without consulting Dalí, and he also began to delete Dalí's name from the credits in *ciné-club* showings. Soon he began to voice a claim he would repeat for the rest of his life: Dalí had only contributed one or two gags to the movie. Although Buñuel had maintained that "a film, like a cathedral, should be anonymous" (AB), that dictum didn't apply to his own films. He was always territorial (see notes 3 and 4 below).

Selling Out and Signing Up: *Las Hurdes*, aka *Tierra sin pan* (Land without Bread, 1933/1936)

What he did want to keep his name out of, however, was the dubbing work he began to do for Paramount in Paris (1931–1934). Although this job provided an income, it was an embarrassment after the summits his career had reached, and he did not want his fellow Surrealists to know that he was working as a lackey in the commercial film industry. This attitude would be equally true for the dubbing work he did in Madrid for Warner's (1934–1935) and the much more exalted position he occupied from 1935 to 1936 at Filmófono (the production company he and Ricardo Urgoiti founded) in Madrid as an executive producer of potboilers for the popular taste, such as *Don quintín el amargao* (Don Quintin the Bitter, dir. Luis Marquina, 1935), which was based on a farce by Carlos Arniches.

By this time the pattern for Buñuel's relations with the public and the press was set. It would involve a mixture of bravado and timidity – his close friend Pepín Bello would describe him as "a big showoff, but also a big coward" (Aub, 1984: 100). Adept at manipulating the press and friends with influence, he would neglect to mention, lie about, or simply dismiss things that did not form part of the image he had cultivated so assiduously, such as his work in commercial film, his willingness to compromise, his professional jealousy, his fearfulness. He was a survivor, and the triumph of his long career against even longer odds may be a testimony to the value of these tactics. He himself was aware of the contradictions and would explore them in a series of satiric self-projections in film that would eventually become another part of the public persona.

The director's third film, *Las Hurdes*, aka *Tierra sin pan*, is immediately recognizable as a work by Buñuel. Although most contemporary critics took it as a faithful record of what the team had seen in the Hurdes area of Spain, the director did not hesitate to manipulate the material in order to get the shocking effects he wanted. Shot in 1933, after Buñuel had joined the Spanish Communist Party, it was originally intended as an indictment of the bourgeois governments under the Republic. Initially banned, the film was not released in Spain until after the Civil War had broken out. By that time, the Comintern had embraced popular front policies, and Buñuel and co-scripter Pierre Unik had refashioned the commentary as a defense of the Republic. In its commercial run in Paris, *Las Hurdes* garnered considerable press. Paramount showed some interest in distributing it internationally but abandoned the idea under threat of commercial reprisals from Franco authorities (Gubern and Hammond, 2010: 197).

"Buñuel Is Dead": The United States

In fact, with the Civil War lost to Franco's forces and his own future looking uncertain, Buñuel had renounced his affiliation with the Communist ranks. He would spend the rest of his life denying that he had ever joined the Party (Buñuel, 1982: 219; Aub, 1984: 72; De la Colina and Pérez Turrent, 1986: 39; Martín, 2010: 429, to cite only a few of many instances). The extra-filmic discourse that frames all of Buñuel's work changed according to the exigencies of the moment. Desperately in need of a job in the United States and fearful of the puritanical and proto-McCarthy lobbies, he would find himself playing up the commercial work at Paramount, Warner Brothers, and Filmófono he had once made every effort to hide and glossing over his proudest productions.

His fears were well founded. It was the notoriety of the first two films, linked with rumors of his far-left politics, that almost certainly cost him his job in New York and not, as Buñuel always claimed, Dalí's reference in *My Secret Life* (1942) to his atheism. By 1944, in his successful application to Warner's, he has reduced *Un chien andalou* and *L'Âge d'or* to "a few films in France" (Sánchez Vidal, 1988: 296–299; Martín, 2010: 529).

In his "Auto-Biography," written in English in 1939, he opts for a jocular, self-deprecating tone that many years later would also characterize his memoir, *Mon dernier soupir* (My Last Sigh, 1982). Here he distances himself from the scandal of *L'Âge d'or*, "a romantic film performed in full surrealistic frenzy," emphasizing that film's technical advances in the use of sound, underlining his work with Paramount, Warner's, and Filmófono, and speaking at some length about *Las Hurdes*, "an objective document" – no reference to its tendentious nature – before getting to the point of the autobiographical sketch: his interest in finding work related to the production of documentary film in the United States. He comes

across here as charming and unassuming, but his humility has a limit: he claims Dalí as a famous friend, but neglects to mention the painter's contribution to what he refers to here as his own "modest work" (AB:573-1 11, 15, and 1).

The change of mien Buñuel adopted in the United States can be summed up by a comment he wrote in early 1939 to his old Filmófono partner Ricardo Urgoiti: "Buñuel is dead" (Herrera-Navarro, 2002: 559). By this point, the director was very aware that his signature promised a certain kind of film. The considerable compromises he had made in his European work had either been anonymous or passed under the radar (the unreleased short version of *L'Âge d'or*, the softened commentary of *Las Hurdes*). In the United States, once he'd lost his position in the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs, and again in Mexico, commercial success would be the key to finding work. Buñuel would have to sell himself on box-office, not artistic, appeal.

Although his name is notable for its total absence in Filmófono documents (Gubern and Hammond, 2010: 226), Buñuel had actually begun to work out a formula for acknowledging commercial work even before leaving Europe. In one of the few contemporary interviews on *Las Hurdes*, he is asked if he would shoot a commercial film. Answer: he always rebuffs efforts to encourage the idiocy of the masses – no reference to his work for the North Americans and Filmófono – but would certainly be interested in a film designed for "millions of eyes" that follows his own unalterable moral line (AB).

Hard Times and Potboilers: Mexico

Buñuel's hopes of making an English-language film in Hollywood that "doesn't destroy the moral line I've always followed" were dashed when Warner's closed its Spanish dubbing department and released the director in 1945 (Sánchez Vidal, 2004: 24). In the hard years that followed, he would have to modify his demands to specify, simply, a film that was not repugnant to his beliefs. Throughout his career in Mexico, he would often insist, as he told a Belgian reviewer in 1955, that "I have never 'betrayed', never agreed to say the opposite of what I thought and felt" (AB). Where he drew that line is not entirely clear. For economic and professional reasons, he was forced to take on a number of subjects with which he could hardly have agreed: *Gran casino*, aka *En el viejo Tampico* (Magnificent Casino, 1946), *Susana*, aka *Carne y demonio* (Susana, aka The Devil and the Flesh, 1950), *Una mujer sin amor* (A Woman without Love, 1951), and *El río y la muerte* (The River and Death, 1955), to name the most obvious. He managed to save some of those films – or at least save face – by pushing their premises to the point of absurdity (*Susana* is an example although Buñuel was never happy with it), but not always (*Gran casino* and *Una mujer sin amor* resisted "salvation").

Buñuel simply consigned the films that did not work out to oblivion. "Artistically, they are zeros. They made it possible for me to shoot the films I believe in," he says

in 1953 (AB). In the interview for the Belgian paper, he disowns the potboilers: "I put absolutely nothing of myself in [them] … I've never taken a film seriously if I couldn't put my esthetic and moral concerns in it. I refuse to express myself." The disavowal is convenient; it's hard to criticize any film the director himself has repudiated.

Gran casino was intended to open the way for Buñuel as a commercial director after his move to Mexico, but it proved to be an economic, as well as artistic and professional, disaster, nearly finishing his newborn career. A long article, published in January 1949, by fellow exile Álvaro Custodio, by then a leading critic for *Excelsior*, pleads for the industry to give the director another chance. The article reflects Buñuel's input, arguing that *Las Hurdes* demonstrated he could reach the masses and that his famous experimental films are "not incompatible with commercial work, as long as it is dignified" (AB). The following month, the producer Óscar Dancigers gave him a contract at Ultramar, a regular salary, and an opportunity to show he could make money for the industry (Sánchez Vidal, 2004: 32). Describing himself as "an apprentice when it came to so-called normal film," Buñuel prepared carefully for his first movie with Dancigers, even studying Lev Kuleshov's theory of montage (Sánchez Vidal, 2004: 33). His success with *El gran calavera* (The Great Madcap, 1949), a slight but likeable comedy starring the hugely popular Francisco Soler, opened the way for *Los olvidados* (The Forgotten Ones, aka The Young and the Damned, 1950).

Return to Self: *Los olvidados*

Aware of how much was dependent on that film, Buñuel went to great trouble. As it turned out, the publicity would be almost as important as the work itself. Aware that Mexicans might well construe his presentation of slum life in the capital as a slight, he added a voice-over prologue clarifying that the problems shown in the film plague all great cities: New York, London, Paris, Mexico. In the many interviews about the film, he reiterated that point and added a second one: "If it's hard to watch, that's not my fault. I haven't shown anything I didn't see, and I've actually held back a lot" (AB). The film, he insists, is a documentary, not a work of fiction. In support of this argument, he cites his research: visits to the Juvenile Court, the women's prison, and clinics for the retarded (Aub, 1984: 118 and AB). He even ventures to say at one point: "I was inspired by psychopedagogy!" (AB). Buñuel was inspired by many things, but certainly never by anything so edifying as psychopedagogy; however, the contention, absurd as it was, tied in with his presentation of *Los olvidados* as scientific, objective, and based on evidence; in other words, a film innocent of malice. Rather than criticizing his new home – by this time he had become a Mexican citizen – he is merely recording an unfortunate by-product of modern life.

In its first run *Los olvidados* closed after three days. This was due less to public opposition than to the public's preference for more entertaining material, combined with a weak publicity campaign and a bad choice of theater (AB). Buñuel knew he had a film that would revive his reputation if only he could find the proper audience, and he pulled every possible string to save *Los olvidados* and with it his career as a serious filmmaker. He telegraphed his old friend Iris Barry, offering to appear in New York if she would set up a showing at MoMA (Museum of Modern Art), and Henri Langlois of the Cinemathèque Française with the same proposition (Sánchez Vidal, 2004: 49). Neither of these efforts bore fruit, but the Mexican poet Octavio Paz, then Secretary to the embassy in Paris and a Surrealist himself, set up a special showing for what remained of the Surrealists, and Buñuel traveled there – his first visit since 1938 – to attend the screening. Paz persuaded the festival committee to invite the film to compete in Cannes, undertaking, at Buñuel's instigation, what he called "the battle for *Los olvidados*" (Herrera-Navarro, 2001: 50). Viewed by an international audience, the film was a huge success, winning the Jury Prize and the prize for best direction. After this triumph, *Los olvidados* got a new run in Mexico, won ten Ariel awards, and became such a hit that one reviewer even accused the Mexican press of suffering from "olvidaditis" (AB).

Prizes would continue to play a critical role in Buñuel's Mexican period, securing his place within an industry which did not always respond well to his work and ensuring international distribution for films that might otherwise have been buried. *Nazarín* (1959), for example, had a close call when the selection committee decided to send Ismael Rodríguez's *La cucaracha* (The Soldiers of Pancho Villa, 1959) to Cannes as Mexico's official entry, but was saved, first, by a personal invitation to the festival – thanks to the efforts of John Huston – and, second, by winning the International Prize. The huge number of prizes it garnered also helped reconcile the Mexican public to *Viridiana*, a film that, like *Los olvidados*, initially excited some suspicion at home. In this case, however, while the Mexicans celebrated a victory at Cannes, the Palme d'Or led to the film's being banned in Spain, where it was shot and co-produced (AB). The diplomatic skills Buñuel had honed in *Los olvidados* would be exercised to the full in relation to *Viridiana*.

A Hot Time: *Viridiana*

Rumors started to fly in the Mexican press in early 1960 when Buñuel – at the instigation of actor Francisco Rabal and other friends in Spain – began to entertain the notion of returning home for a shoot. Alerted by Rabal, the press jumped on the story. In the resultant fire storm, Buñuel's defenders attacked the messenger – "RABAL LIES: BUÑUEL WILL NOT FILM IN SPAIN" – demanding, "Who are you to tell a journalist that Buñuel will film in Spain? What does Luis Buñuel have to do with Spain today?" It goes on to say that Buñuel will only film in Spain when

Pablo Casals gives a concert there and Pablo Picasso goes home to paint. Buñuel tells all of the critics what they want to hear, hence the headline trumpeting: "RETURN TO SPAIN? NO WAY!" As long as a certain party (Franco) remains in power, the director insists, he will certainly not work in Spain (AB).

His own affirmations, along with the avowals of Mexican critics, all maintaining that he had too much integrity to ever grace the Franco regime with his genius, made a change of heart very tricky, but Buñuel did just that, convinced by a combination of factors, including his longing to return and his desire to help young filmmakers like Carlos Saura (AB).

To retain the support he still needed in Mexico, Buñuel made a point of explaining his reasons to a few of his champions in the press, who in turn shared them with the public. A new set of headlines resulted: "NO NEED FOR US TO BE SELF-RIGHTEOUS" and "WHY BUÑUEL FILMED '*VIRIDIANA*' IN SPAIN." One critic who had earlier insisted that the director would never film in Franco's Spain now argues that Buñuel saw it as his duty to shoot the film "right there in El Pardo, under the General's nose." The journalists were won over not only by Buñuel's words but also by the uncompromising nature of the film, along with its many awards (AB).

Still, the situation was tricky, and to make things even more problematic, Buñuel would be working not only with his Mexican producer, Gustavo Alatriste, but also with UNINCI (Industrial Cinematographic Union). UNINCI was responsible for the most interesting films in Spain at the time – especially *Bienvenido, Mister Marshall* (Welcome, Mr. Marshall, 1953), a comic commentary on the state of the nation by Juan Antonio Bardem and Luis García Berlanga – but it was a very strange fish politically. While enjoying considerable patronage from Spain's fascist regime, the association was connected to the clandestine Communist Party. The Party was relying on the success of Buñuel's upcoming film to give the company a big push, but for political reasons Buñuel was reluctant to recognize UNINCI as his sole support in Spain. He got around the problem by insisting that Pere Portabella sign on as co-producer even though Portabella's Films 59 was broke (Riambau, 2007: 337, 334).

Beyond these convoluted negotiations, he needed to get the kind of film he wanted past the Spanish censors. Faced with apparently irreconcilable demands – the Mexicans wanted a film condemning Franco's government; the censors would brook no criticism of the regime, and Buñuel himself wanted to explore his own decidedly mixed reactions at returning to his former home – he resorted to what had become a favorite modus operandi, both in his work and in interviews: ambiguity.

The strategy worked … up to a point. As has been described, the Mexicans were tickled by what they saw as an indictment of the Franco regime and not only forgave but actually praised Buñuel for working in Spain. At the same time, the Spanish censors allowed themselves to be hoodwinked, requesting only minor changes in the rather anodyne screenplay. Their attitude allowed the director to

insist, repeatedly, that he enjoyed great freedom filming in Spain (AB). But, according to Juan Antonio Bardem, he was wary enough of that freedom to play a little trick on the censors in the showing before the film left for the final sound mix in France, concealing those elements – the crucifix-knife, the "snapshot" at the banquet, and the Hallelujah chorus – that would be sure to incite their condemnation (Carnicero and Sánchez Salas, 2000: 77).

The director was certainly aware that *Viridiana* would embarrass the Franco regime – hence the subterfuge and his refusal to go to Cannes himself for the presentation – but he seems to have been truly perplexed at the ferocity of the government's reaction. He said often that if the film hadn't won the Palme d'Or, the Spanish response would have been quite different. Even after the prize and the regime's initial reaction, he had hopes the film would be shown in the peninsula, even if this involved a few cuts (De la Colina and Pérez Turrent, 1986: 143, AB).

This did not prove to be the case. The regime went after the film with tooth and claw, not only by firing the functionary who hopped onto the stage at Cannes to accept the award and by disbanding UNINCI, but also by pressuring other countries to ban the film and even punishing any reference to it in print (AB). This onslaught put paid to Buñuel's notions of making more films in Spain (he had hoped to shoot *Tristana* there in 1962, but this project would be put off until 1970) and the dismemberment of UNINCI dealt a hard blow to the young filmmakers he had wanted to help.

The government's efforts to obliterate *Viridiana* created numerous problems – exhibition in France, for example, was held up for almost a year – but the immense publicity generated by the regime's ferocity turned out to be invaluable. Thanks to a widespread desire to repudiate the dictatorship, as well as to its own artistic quality, *Viridiana* won "more prizes than any other film in the world," and Franco turned out to be, in one critic's words, its "best publicist" (AB).

Viridiana enjoyed commercial success as well as prizes, and the director gave a huge number of interviews, the majority deploying what had become his usual array of ruses. I cite them in some detail as examples of techniques he had honed over the years. Reluctant to admit to anything, as he once told Max Aub (1984: 71), he always liked to give himself wiggle room and consistently refused to admit his films had an explicit meaning or at least any meaning he was willing to elucidate.

Whether because he still entertained hopes the film might show in Spain or that he might work there again or that things would not go so badly for UNINCI or just out of natural caginess, he absolutely refused to acknowledge publicly that *Viridiana* made the regime and the Church look bad, insisting that no matter what "one of the solemn pedants at the *Cahiers du cinéma*" writes, the film is not "anti-Franco," has nothing to do with a "new Spain," and is not "anti-religious" (AB).

In line with this position, he would argue that the film has nothing to do with Spain: "I was first going to shoot it in Mexico" and that "it's so innocent a little girl could see it." It's a "chaste" film: *Viridiana* is just as virgin at the end as she is at the beginning. It's not anti-religious or irreverent: a priest advised me. My co-writer is

a convinced Catholic (all AB). The crucifix-knife is a common object: I've seen a nun use one (De la Colina and Pérez Turrent, 1986: 140); my sister has seen a nun use one. "As for the beggars, I'm not responsible; they've been like that for centuries. I didn't invent them; I just showed them as they are." I evoked da Vinci's Last Supper to give the banquet sequence a certain "grandeur," not as a sacrilege (all AB). The "suitable for children" and the "documentary" (I just filmed what I saw) excuses were great favorites, used with any number of films, as was his insistence that he never develops a thesis in film, followed logically by his favorite ploy of all: "Let other people find meanings if they want to!" The open interpretation approach reached its culmination in what might be the director's definitive comment on this troubled film: "There's nobody in the world who can prove the film said anything particular at all" (all AB).

In general, these interviews serve as a smokescreen to hide what Buñuel undoubtedly knew to be true (and admitted in only two contemporary interviews): of course the film had a "subversive charge" and, yes, he had touched on "the religious problem," but only "implicitly". In spite of all the ruses, the interviews also provide occasional insights into his approach to film: he made the film because he "wanted and needed to," the images that shocked so many people attracted him primarily as "poetry"; he is intuitive, never systematic; his primary interest is telling a story through images and, finally, "*Viridiana* is myself. It's a remembrance of things past, things that happened when I was a child. … I want my audience to associate itself with my experiences" (all AB).

Staying Afloat: Publicity

Buñuel had decidedly mixed feelings about self-promotion. His experience of the movie industry had taught him to view publicity and prizes with profound cynicism: he knew how those things worked. His first visit to Hollywood had shown him the ugly side of the industry: "I didn't want to make any more movies. I was repelled by that atmosphere: the public, the reviews, the producers, etc." (De la Colina and Pérez Turrent, 1986: 35). This reaction never quite left him. In his memoirs he writes of the horror inspired by the ostentatious façades of certain movie theaters: "They make me feel ashamed, and I walk by fast" (1982: 274).

However, he also recognized that interviews, publicity, and prizes were essential to maintaining his reputation as a serious artist at a time when he was forced to shoot a string of potboilers and when even his best films were compromised by short shooting schedules, uneven performances, and economic woes. Such things as the 1956 homage at the Cinemathèque Française, the series of interviews published by Andre Bazin, and the awards at Cannes kept his international career afloat and also gave him much-needed prestige in Mexico. Like it or not, he needed the publicity.

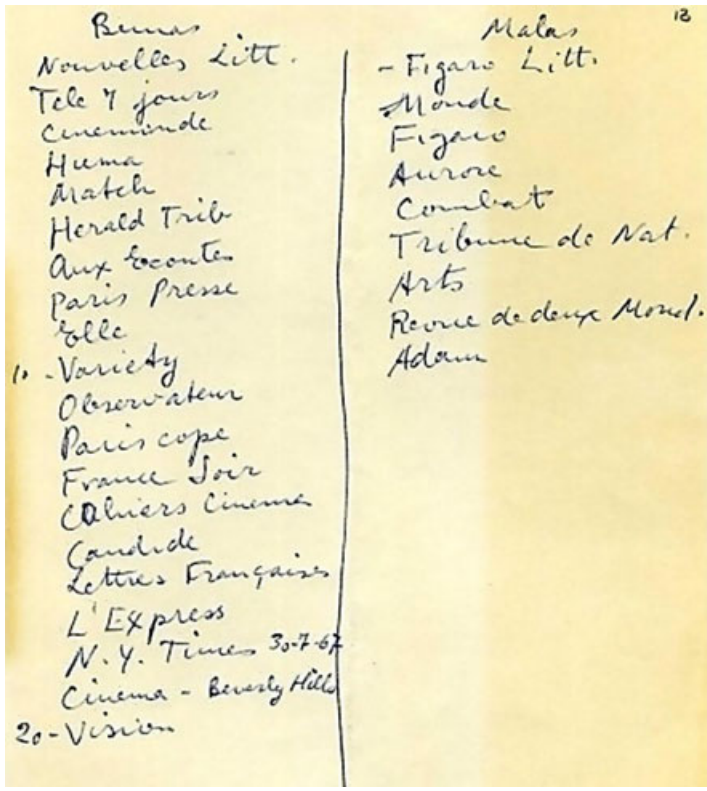


Figure 2.1 Good reviews and bad reviews. Buñuel tots up the score on *Belle de Jour*. Archivo Buñuel.

Paradoxically, his aversion to publicity became part of that publicity. His occasional outbursts of ire at reporters only fueled his image as "implacable," "outrageous," and "infernal" (AB). For all his protests, he did not entirely dislike the attention. To be more precise, he demanded it, and the protests, as much as anything, were a way of assuaging his conscience. He was intensely aware of his prerogatives as the director, and friends – apart from Dalí – were sometimes a little surprised to find their names left out of the credits for a film they had worked on.[3]

If he were the one heaping praise on an actor or colleague, he could be generous in the extreme. But any time he felt threatened, a competitive streak came out. He was, for example, particularly jealous of Gabriel Figueroa, his principal cameraman in Mexico, and managed to saddle him with the often cited but intentionally distorted anecdote about the two scenic shots set up for Nazarín – one conventionally beautiful, one to the Buñuel taste – as a way of embarrassing him (as Buñuel tells the story, Figueroa was longing to use the conventional view; in fact, it was Buñuel who asked him to set up both views so that he, Buñuel, could decide) (Sánchez Vidal, 2004: 42).[4]

None of this rivalry was allowed to tarnish his public image. Buñuel always claimed that he had no interest in his films after he'd wrapped them and that he never read the press. In one hilarious interview with Jean-Claude Carrière, who knew him well, he asserts, first, "I thank the people [who've written about me], but I never read them." Then, probably spotting Carrière's amusement, "I almost never read them." Then, "I sometimes glance at them," before finishing triumphantly: "I'm a big enemy of publicity. Exhibitionism, it's horrible!" (AB).

The extensive clipping file in the Buñuel Archive shows he kept everything related to his career, not only huge numbers of clippings, but even letters from strangers and amateur essays. And he kept track of who said what. A loose-leaf page, written in his hand, in one of the *Belle de jour* (1967) files, shows two columns – a long one headed "Good ones" and a shorter one headed "Bad ones" – totting up the reactions of critics in France to *Belle de jour* (AB) (see Figure 2.1 above). In a similar vein, also part of his archive, is a detailed list, undoubtedly typed by Buñuel, with handwritten additions, labeled PRIZES (Carnicero and Sánchez Salas, 2000: 632–633). The man who kept these lists was anything but indifferent to the fortunes of his films.

Testimonies from colleagues and friends argue for the same conclusion. According to Sánchez Vidal, Buñuel:

> read the books about his work and the reviews … He was conscious of his role in the history of film, of what the critics said about him, of the differences between *Cahiers du cinéma* and *Positif*, of which important critics he needed to talk to when he wanted to get something done. If he had to take care of a film, he knew how to do it … He knew all this by heart. And prizes stopped mattering to him when he didn't need them anymore. (Carnicero and Sánchez Salas, 2000: 497)

José Antonio Bardem, José Luis Borau, and Ricardo Muñoz Suay have very similar takes on Buñuel's supposed lack of concern for publicity. In Bardem's words, "it's a lie" (Carnicero and Sánchez Salas, 2000: 82, 122; Aub, 1984: 431).

The Oscar

All of Buñuel's ambivalence about prizes is summed up in his experience of the Oscar. The first time he was put up for Best Foreign Film (1971 for *Tristana*), he told an interviewer in Mexico that

> nothing would upset me more from a moral point of view than receiving the Oscar. It's the most abject prize of all. Even rejecting it, you can't free yourself of its corrupting influence … I wouldn't go [to Hollywood] to accept it for anything in the world, nor would I have it in my home. (AB)

Buñuel was saved from corruption by *Tristana*'s loss, but a year later, following a formidable publicity campaign in the United States, *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* (The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie, 1972) was nominated. This time Buñuel told a number of reporters that he knew he would win the prize, because he had paid $20,000 for it, but, again, that nothing would induce him to go to Hollywood (AB). They dutifully reported the story, with the resultant furor. Shortly after, a counter-story appeared in which Buñuel accused the first reporters of "totally deforming" what he had said and pointed out that he had lived in Hollywood on three different occasions and liked it (AB).

He did not attend the ceremony, but when *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* won, he did not reject the prize either. He had already gone to Hollywood a few months earlier for the opening of the film there and a dinner in his honor with George Cukor, John Ford, Alfred Hitchcock, Rouben Mamoulian, Robert Mulligan, George Stevens, Billy Wilder, Robert Wise, and William Wyler, and a meeting the next day with his old idol, Fritz Lang. The photographs of him at the "Gathering of Giants" (AB) show a man in his element, looking pleased as punch.

Versions of Self

Ironically for someone who insisted that his hatred of the press stemmed "not from modesty, but from my need for privacy – I'm embarrassed when I see something about me in print" and that "I don't want to feed gossip columns" (AB; Poniatowska, 1999: 92), Buñuel is one of the most personal of filmmakers, his interest in the cinema springing from an irresistible need to communicate what he called "demands of the subconscious that struggle to the surface" (De la Colina and Pérez Turrent, 1986: 158). In his best work, like *Viridiana*, he relies heavily on his own experiences to provide the emotional charge that moves us. On a number of occasions, he goes even farther by featuring a protagonist who is a fanciful, but easily recognized, version of himself. The tendency, as we've seen, was old, beginning with his idealized projection of the self as a ruthless surgeon in *Un chien andalou* and soon after fleshed out in the figure of a Gaston Modot enraged by social constraints and sexual frustration in *L'Âge d'or*.

Although he puts parts of himself into many, perhaps most, of his male protagonists, his most striking versions of self after *L'Âge d'or* occur in the Arturo de Córdova character in *Él* (This Strange Passion, 1953) and in the four characters played by Fernando Rey, starting with *Viridiana* and only ending with his last film *Cet obscur objet du désir* (That Obscure Object of Desire, 1977). Not autobiographical in any classic sense of the word, these cinematic self-projections share traits, rather than situations, with the filmmaker, providing him with a warped glass in which to examine his own fears and fantasies. As many of his friends probably realized, they are a tease, playing fast and loose with the particulars, balancing revelation with disguise, exaggerating partial truths to the point of absurdity.

Of all his self-portrayals, Buñuel felt closest to Fernando Rey's Lope in *Tristana*, avowing at one point that "I am don Lope" (Aub, 1984: 146). He is thinking, particularly, of Lope's decline in old age from espousing left-wing politics to embracing the Church. Although the director did not go that far, he did lament that "old age changes everyone" (De la Colina and Pérez Turrent, 1986: 183).

Playing Buñuel

Whether it was the effect of old age, the luxury of having complete freedom and considerable resources, the influence of co-scripter Carrière and producer Serge Silberman, or a combination of these circumstances, Buñuel did change in the late French films. Carrière has said that "we pushed Buñuel to be Buñuel. Because … Buñuel's great defect was that he could sometimes be a realist. So, with Silberman's approval, I had to push him as far as possible" (Carnicero and Sánchez Salas, 2000: 178). Always conscious of what a Buñuel film entails – he speaks of "buñuelizing" his material and often refers to an odd detail as "my kind of thing" (AB) – he now begins to add surreal touches almost gratuitously, to "play Buñuel," at the same time that the films become less abrasive, more palatable, slicker, and much easier to sell.

In any event, for better or worse, Buñuel's "brand" was recognized, his films did well at the box office, and his reputation was assured. On top of all that, publicity was now in the capable hands of Silberman. The director could afford to be more casual about the fate of his films. He gradually cut back on the number of promotional interviews and said less and less in the few he gave.

Long Interviews: No Peeking

Buñuel did make two notable concessions in these later years: in 1969 he gave three long interviews to his old friend and colleague Max Aub, and in 1975–1979 he granted a whole series of interviews on his films to the young Mexican filmmakers José De la Colina and Tomás Pérez Turrent.

Buñuel was wary of all three interviewers. He was, no doubt, relieved, as well as distressed, that Aub died without finishing his projected book – *Buñuel, a Novel*. He and the writer had known each other since the 1930s. Although Aub insisted his book was to be primarily about "our generation" (1984: 33), he tries repeatedly to catch his friend off guard. Buñuel simply ignores the questions he does not like or answers with bromides perfected over time. No surprise here: Aub has already predicted that Buñuel "will not answer or he will lie, a little or a lot, according to his mood" (1984: 33). Still, talking to somebody who knows him well, the director is forced to be somewhat more candid than usual. As to his escape to the United

States in the last months of the Civil War – usually converted into a "diplomatic mission" at the behest of Republican higher-ups – he acknowledges that he asked the ambassador in Paris and the Minister of Foreign Affairs to let him go and then borrowed the money from friends to get there. In other words – although he does not put it this way – there was no mission, just a rush for the exit.

He continues insisting that he did not ever join the Party, but gets closer to admitting the truth when he exclaims: "I was never a Republican" (Aub, 1984: 71). He flirts with revelation, but he does not really give away his deepest secrets. Otherwise, he and Aub converse quite frankly about a wide range of topics – his cowardice, his nightmares, his sense of inner conflict – about which he clearly feels less vulnerable.

The tone is rather different in the series of interviews conducted by De la Colina and Pérez Turrent. These were much younger men who did not share the Spanish experience and who were hoping Buñuel would explain the meaning of his films and even of specific images, something he had no desire to do and that Aub was too astute to ask. As they describe it, "the process of the book was a real battle, a constant pursuit of somebody who often came out victorious," hence the title of the first edition: *No Looking Inside* (1986: 11).

Much of the interviewers' frustration seems to stem from Buñuel's refusal to be pinned down to their rather reductionist readings of his films. Actually, the book provides many valuable insights into what the director looks for in filming and about his relation to his work. It is entertaining, as well. Buñuel was always aware of his public – not just interviewers, but eventual readers – and he did not want to bore anyone (1986: 182). He comes across here as someone who has his own measure and the measure of his work: self-assured but not self-important, occasionally irascible, but more often charming, and very funny.

Telling It Like It Should Be: *My Last Sigh*

These last interviews served as a dress rehearsal for the memoirs he dictated in French to Carrière. From the beginning, he anticipates criticism by describing the book as "semi-biographical" and warning that he may lie or have memory lapses (1982: 13–14). The book is a record of how the director chose, at a certain moment, to be remembered.

Buñuel seemed to have had a picaresque model in mind when he dictated what he calls "my 'adventures'" (Rubia Barcia, 1992: 103), that is, a chronological storyline interrupted by digressions: here chapters on dreams, on love, on atheism, on likes and dislikes, on earthly pleasures and on death. Like the picaresque novel and like all Buñuel's films, the memoir tends to present information without commenting on it, allowing readers to come to their own conclusions … or just come along for the ride.

The memoir is certainly appealing. Carrière says that in the summer of 1982 it was read on all the beaches of Spain (Amiel, 1993: 102). Although chatty and apparently nonchalant, Buñuel clearly edited his recollections with an idea not only of keeping the reader amused but also of presenting the image he wanted to leave behind. Despite the inclusion of revealing comments and odd episodes, this would be an "official story." First of all, his domestic life as an adult, which was orderly and bourgeois, is notable only for its absence here, omitted either in the interest of privacy or of maintaining his surrealist image or for fear of boring. His wife Jeanne does not even appear in the chapter on love.

Second, not surprisingly, Buñuel sticks to his guns about certain, by then, sacrosanct lies. Obviously these involved very sensitive points. He does not budge about the question of Dalí's non-contribution to *L'Âge d'or* and continues to insist that it was the painter's reference to his atheism in *My Secret Life* that cost him the job in New York in 1943. He still insists that he was sent to the United States as an advisor on Hollywood films about the Civil War and even adds, as he had with De la Colina and Pérez Turrent, that when his draft number was called he wrote to the Spanish ambassador asking to be repatriated along with Jeanne (it is clear from the Aub interviews that he knew they would not make him return; 1984: 93). Once again, he avows that, yes, he was close to the Communists, but no, he never joined the Party, that he left the Surrealist group only because the group had begun to sell out (i.e., not because of the split between Surrealists and Communists) and that he never stopped being a Surrealist in spirit. All of this is familiar material.

At the end of *Cet obscur objet du désir*, his last film, Buñuel sums up his early days with a series of images that refer to his own conception and his first film. His memoirs gave him another opportunity to revisit the past creatively, this time at greater length. In the last chapter, he says it is better to know death is approaching so that there is time to "say goodbye … to all the life we have known" (1982: 310). The memoirs allowed Buñuel to take his leave. They also allowed him to do a little imaginative housekeeping. At one point, he refers to his horror of dying in a hotel somewhere with suitcases open and papers scattered about. An orderly man, Buñuel took this last chance to straighten out a few things, to present them as they should have been: hence, the revision of certain points. Finally, however, loose ends remained.

In the chapter on his likes and dislikes, Buñuel inveighs against publicity one more time: "I despise publicity and do everything possible to avoid it." Then, aware of a little problem, he goes on: "People will ask me, 'So, why have you written this book?'" His answer, first, is to blame Carrière, who talked him into it, and then to cite his own nature: "I have lived my whole life comfortably enough between multiple contradictions, without trying to unravel them. They are part of me, of my ambiguity, which is both natural and acquired" (1982: 279). Ultimately, there is no resolution. The book is one more episode in the life of its author. Fittingly, he collected the material that came out about his book in a file labeled, in his hand, "Letters and articles about my book" (AB).

Clearly this study owes much to the work of Agustín Sánchez Vidal, that most perceptive of writers on Buñuel. However, while Sánchez Vidal has focused on the director's development – both artistic and intellectual – in relation to his friends at the Residencia de Estudiantes (García Lorca, Dalí, and Bello) and to other artistic and intellectual currents of the time (particularly, but by no means solely, the Surrealists), the present discussion is primarily concerned with the director's many public articulations of a self which, as he indicates above, was subject to shifting, often contradictory manifestations and subject, too, to the diverse circumstances and cultures the director encountered, as well as his emotional needs. I have relied heavily on Buñuel's archive of press clippings at the Filmoteca. In addition to the interviews, reviews – often written with the director's input – and press releases, my sources include Buñuel's letters (ostensibly private, but often meant to be publicized), early review work, employment applications, films in which he appears himself (specifically *Un chien andalou*) or in which a parodic double appears (*Él*, *Viridiana*, *Tristana*, *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie*, and *Cet obscur objet du désir*) and, finally, *Mon dernier soupir*, which may represent a culmination, since it came out just a year before Buñuel's death, but offers no real conclusion to a process that would end only with the filmmaker's last words, a final assessment of self: "I am dying now" (Rucar, 1991: 133).

Notes

1 All translations from the Spanish and the French are my own unless otherwise indicated. The film reviews, interviews, and other material sourced here as AB (Archivo Buñuel) are from the director's archive, housed at the Filmoteca Nacional Española and kindly made available to me by the head librarian, Javier Herrera Navarro.

2 Gubern and Hammond fix Buñuel's adhesion to the Party as occurring during a three-month period in the winter of 1931–1932 when he was in Spain (2010: 104–122).

3 Max Aub and Juan Larrea were left out of the credits of *Los olvidados*, as was Pedro Urdimales, the latter possibly at his own insistence. Carlos Fuentes worked on the screenplay of *El ángel exterminador*, but is not mentioned.

4 Apart from denying Dalí's role in *L'Âge d'or*, he never acknowledged Pepín Bello's critical contribution to the stew of ideas that became *Un chien andalou* and *L'Âge d'or* and surfaced in later films as well (Sánchez Vidal, 1988: *passim*).

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3

Buñuel, Master Pyrotechnician

The Role of Firearms in His Cinema

Guy H. Wood and Javier Herrera Navarro

Our instincts respond to the flicker of flame, to the wavering colors of the coals, to the roar of the conflagration.

(Jack Kelly)

Introduction: A Passion for Firearms

Luis Buñuel was not only a controversial filmmaker, but a man of many interests. As he once admitted, "I like obsessions … I cultivate some … Obsessions can help you survive. I feel sorry for men who don't have them" (Buñuel, 1982: 223).[1] One of his most intriguing was a life-long fascination with firearms that led him to become an avid gun enthusiast who once boasted, "I've owned as many as sixty-five revolvers and rifles …" (Buñuel, 1982: 219). More importantly, these "obscure objects of his desire" helped him create all but a handful of his 33 films.[2] Nevertheless, their role in the formation of his character, creativity, and cinematography, especially their connection to his assertion that film could be "a marvelous and dangerous weapon if wielded by a free spirit" (Aranda, 1975: 389), has gone practically unnoticed. This chapter endeavors to elucidate the origins of this "strange passion" and its pervasive importance in Buñuel's *oeuvre* by examining the evolvement of his mastery of pyrotechnical gunplay in his first two films: *Un chien andalou* (An Andalusian Dog, 1929) and *L'Âge d'or* (The Golden Age, 1930).

It should be clarified that for someone like Buñuel, who was born in 1900 and lived for extended periods of time in the United States and Mexico, it was practically as easy to acquire firearms and become a gun collector as it was to be a numismatist or a philatelist. The documents in the Buñuel Archives in Madrid dealing with the

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small arms he purchased, traded, received as gifts, and registered with Mexican authorities, along with the photographs of his collection and the lists he maintained for each of its sections – Antique Firearms, Modern Rifles, and Modern Handguns – indicate that he was very familiar with their development, history, and use. Somewhat of a tightwad, Buñuel enjoyed shooting so much that he even learned to reload his own ammunition to support his hobby.[3] It was natural, then, that firearms became an integral part of his filmmaking. However, to comprehend this passion and the artistic bond between the so-called "one-eyed stare" of a gun's muzzle and the cyclopean lenses of the cameras Buñuel was also to become so adept at using, one must always keep in mind that his "artistic personality and originality have their foundation and keys in the cultural context of his youth in Spain" (Gubern, 2001: 90).

The director substantiated the link between his childhood in provincial Aragón and his affinity for guns in his conversations with writer Max Aub:

> I owe my fondness for firearms to my father, in Havana he sold quite a few, and every so often the Smith and Wesson Company would give him a revolver, with mother-of-pearl grips and his initials engraved on it. Sometimes when I got sick, [he] would come into my room to see me and would lend or give me one. (Aub, 1985: 41)[4]

It is not difficult to imagine what they represented for young Buñuel: the possibility of a closer relationship with his elderly father, the dream of future adventures gun(s) in hand, and the realization not only of the destructive power that firearms give their users, but of everything this power means for whoever holds it in their hands.[5] There was also the hypnotic aesthetic pleasure stimulated by handling them and examining the conjunction of parts of polished blued steel and finely finished hardwood. For gun enthusiasts from Buñuel's generation, the production of firearms was an art form created via a fusion of science, industry, and manual skill which also coincided with the technology and craftsmanship needed to fabricate the first movie cameras (Janssen's photographic revolver [1874] or Marey's photographic rifle [1882]), and which also gave rise to the seventh art. The constant focus on fetishism in Buñuel's films surely had its origins in the appreciation for fine guns that his father inculcated in a son who would "shoot" many films.[6] Ironically and importantly, the aesthetic bond between fetishistic small arms and the camera-as-weapon was being forged in Buñuel long before he realized it.

In his memoirs, Buñuel reiterates the seductive power of firearms:

> Since I was a kid I was really fascinated by firearms. When I was just fourteen I had gotten myself a little Browning that I always carried with me, clandestinely, of course. One day my mother suspected something and frisked me and felt the pistol. I quickly escaped … and threw the gun in the trash can … and recovered it later. (1982: 32)

This anecdote confirms a nascent rebelliousness, individualism, and machismo, all stemming, as Buñuel confesses, from a pretentious compulsion to carry

handguns. It is also possible that his well-documented paranoia (inherited from his gun-toting father?) might date from his youth in arms, a peculiarity that would help him create his film *Él* (This Strange Passion, 1952) and its obsessive protagonist. This *amour fou* for firearms also points to a Freudian castration complex. Or is it mere coincidence the director mentions a "pistola grande" (large pistol) in relation to his wealthy father and a "pequeña" (small) Browning and his vigilant mother?

Hunting was another aspect of Buñuel's youth that would play a key role in his upbringing, obsession with guns, and his cinema. The chase is an ancient and integral part of life in rural Spain, especially attractive for someone – like Buñuel – from a landowning family with a tradition of gun ownership. Indeed, he confessed to Max Aub, "I was a pretty good hunter. Always remorseful, but a pretty good hunter" (Aub, 1985: 100). Afield Buñuel honed his skills with rifles and shotguns, firearms he also collected, and that from *L'Âge d'or* on appeared frequently in his films. He was surely more aware than other directors of man's instinctive venatic impulses and the paradoxical (sur)reality of modern hunting.[7]

Furthermore, hunting has always been a rite of passage and a release mechanism for all manner of youthful energies and frustrations. To go into the wilderness, stalk and kill game, and then return to the clan or civilization is an ancestral initiation into manhood. It is also an escape from what Spanish novelist Miguel Delibes calls "civilization's corset that oppresses and encumbers us all" (1966: 410), a constraint that weighed heavily on Buñuel, as he ponders in his memoirs, "Do you suppose it was because during my childhood and youth that I was the victim of the most ferocious sexual repression known to History?" (Buñuel, 1982: 33). The hunter is licensed to kill and afield exists in a transitory state of *libertas* and Libertinism. Hence, out-of-doors with lethal weapon in hand Buñuel certainly began to catch glimpses of a truly elusive quarry, one that he pursued throughout his entire life and filmography: the phantom of liberty. Society's emasculation of the individual became a leitmotif in his films and, as shall be seen, from the beginning of his career he transformed firearms into preferred symbols for combating all types of repression, especially what he called the "tyrannical function of sex" (1982: 22).

Like most cynegetic aficionados, Buñuel not only realized that to hunt is to be human but that nature is based on what Paul Shepard calls "the paradox of death as a source of life" (1973: 162). According to Shepard, predation and copulation are life's most profound passions and surge during "the demonic moment of the kill and of orgasm" (1973: 170), while the symbolic relationship between the hunt and love is what he calls "a primal motif" (1973: 169). Hunting's dynamism and carnality, the hunter's bestial manliness and sexuality, and his phallic weaponry were destined to become an integral part of Buñuel's artistic arsenal, and used to represent the age-old polarity between male and female and life and death and to (re)create these instinctive "demonic moments" in his films. For example, predation and copulation form the basis of *Susana* (1950), a film whose subtitle, *Demonio y*

carne (Demon and Flesh), cynegetic scenes and impish seductress exemplify the importance of these venatic "primal motifs" for Buñuel.[8]

The obsession with guns continued well past his youth, and two of the most significant indications of his collector's ardor date from the time he spent at the MGM studios in Hollywood in 1930. There he discovered how easy it was to acquire high-quality firearms in the United States. In his book *Hollywood Cake Walk (1930–32)*, French cineaste Claude Autant-Lara reproduces a conversation with Buñuel that merits lengthy quotation:

> What interested me was discovering what it was that he, Buñuel, might find so "extraordinary" about this country.
>
> ***
>
> "Here … they have fantastic rifles. FANTASTIC!"
>
> ***
>
> "Lots of rifles, Shit! Lots of rifles!
> He pretended to shoulder [a rifle] … and shoot.
> "Me, when I go some place new … right away I go for the most interesting thing … and HERE – it's the rifles!"
>
> ***
>
> The tone of his voice became one of disappointment, almost sad because I didn't share his love of rifles …
> He seemed to inherently understand me.
> "If you have no interest at all in rifles, you are going to have a really shitty time here – because other than the "rifles" …
> He rolled his eyes back with, with a real passion in them.
> He declared preemptively, waving his check:
> "So, I'm going TO BUY SOME RIFLES! I'm going to buy lots.
>
> ***
>
> He got into giving me all sorts of details on these famous "rifles."
> … he talked about them with a collector's fervor – that of a lunatic – that of a nut of a gun nut.
> that he was going to buy two … maybe three.
> He wasn't only impassioned, but ENAMORED of guns.
>
> (Autant-Lara, 1985: 134–135)

It seems Buñuel had really gone "gun crazy" in Hollywood, which he corroborates in *My Last Sigh*: "The first thing I did was buy a Ford, a Leica and a rifle" (Buñuel, 1982: 125). It is interesting to ponder the relationship between these "passions" and Susan Sontag's opinion on them. In fact, one wonders if she had read Buñuel's memoirs before writing: "Like guns and cars, cameras are fantasy-machines whose use is addictive" (Sontag, 1977: 14).[9] During what are known as

Buñuel's "Red Years" (1929–1939), the director had certainly become obsessed with these icons of materialism, and, significantly, he had already begun to forge his future with two of them.

Buñuel Opens Fire: The Six-Gun Mystique and Western Parody in *Un chien andalou*

Buñuel grew up not only learning about guns with his father and while hunting, but in the cradle of both the cinema and the Western. Owen Wister's *The Virginian*, considered the first novel of the Far West, was published in 1902, while Edwin S. Porter's classic, *The Great Train Robbery*, premiered in 1903. Furthermore, in the1920s artists like William S. Hart and Zane Grey not only assured the Western's success, but generated followers and imitators everywhere. This genuinely American genre's "heroic outlaws" were fantasy figures for readers, writers, audiences, and cineastes alike, and many were captivated by what John Cawelti (1981) calls the "six-gun mystique": the aura of manliness, autonomy, and self-assurance that emanates from the Westerner's skill with a revolver. Buñuel was no exception, as he reveals in *My Last Sigh*: "My specialty has always been the quick draw with a revolver. You go walking along, turn abruptly around, and fire at a silhouette, *just like in the Westerns*" (1982: 219, emphasis added).[10] He also told Max Aub, "Guns give me confidence" (Aub, 1985: 43), and in *Un chien andalou*'s third part, "Sixteen Years Before," there is a "demonic moment" of six-gun mystique in which the cyclist-protagonist (Pierre Batcheff) suddenly transforms into a pistolero when the books he is holding turn into a pair of revolvers he empties into an "intruder." Apparently, this "stranger" has hindered some sort of libidinal activity, setting off a pyrotechnical reaction to sexual tyranny.

Even for French moviegoers in 1929 the mystical and mythical connection between this instantaneous gunman and his literary/cinematic precursors must have jumped out at them, which made this evocation of such a symbolic figure ridiculously surreal. Significantly too, the images of the pistols' muzzles spewing smoke and fire were preceded by another strange buccal gag in the first part of the film titled, "At Three O'clock in the Morning." In one of its scenes, the cyclist fondles the breasts of the woman (Simone Maureil) he is chasing and a viscous sputum dribbles out of his mouth. The predation of this "object of desire" has led to an orgasmic "demonic moment," evocatively linked to the revolvers and the "demonic instant" of their deathly discharge in "Sixteen Years Before." Batcheff is the first of many Buñuelian characters who pursue love gun in hand and whose frustrations and firearms originate ancestral primal motifs and spectacular pyrotechnics.

The Western myth not only dramatizes conflicts between the forces of good and evil, man and nature, and law and order, but has the psychological function of

alleviating the audience's feelings of hostility and aggression. The transformation of *Un chien andalou*'s sexually repressed cyclist into the evocative image of the gunslinger by a defiant novice director who was "enamored" of firearms suggests that the genesis of the Parisian pistolero and his purgative gunfire had multiple origins and meanings. This notion is supported by other exegetes who have remarked on the facial similarities between Batcheff and two stars of the silent film era: the aforementioned William S. Hart, alias "Two-Gun Bill," and Buster "Stone Face" Keaton.[11] The close-ups of these actors' glaring visages, along with the one-eyed stare of their six-guns, aimed to electrify moviegoers by confronting them with their own vulnerability and mortality, a surreal effect the Parisian gunman also stimulates.[12]

We will delve into *Un chien andalou*'s gunman's similarities with the Western shortly, but here it is important to note that Buñuel and Dalí were certainly among the first cineastes to have deterritorialized the genre. The strangeness of this displacement is surreptitiously underlined by the Lefaucheux revolvers Batcheff wields. This handgun was invented in 1828 by Frenchman Eugene Lefaucheux, and was another firearm Buñuel had in his collection.[13] They not only reinforce the Gaulish and (sur)real image of this "two-gun" Parisian, but continue the film's hand/onanism/ejaculation theme. And if violence is a key element in the Western and guns constitute its moral crux, Batcheff and his Lefaucheuxs not only represent rebelliousness, but create a mini-baguette Western that spoofs his many fictional predecessors, most especially those of one of Surrealism's key precursors, a cineaste admired by both Buñuel and Dalí: Buster Keaton.[14]

In Hollywood, Keaton was considered an "artistic outlaw," an iconoclast who gave priority to stimulating laughter while also managing to combine escapism with genuine human existence. Significantly, one of the narrative objectives of *Un chien andalou* was also to generate laughter, one more perturbing than Keaton's, but equally dissentious. About Hollywood in the 1920s and its "outlaw" Buñuel opined, "Buster Keaton School … vitality, photogeneity, lack of culture, novice tradition" (cited in Aranda, 1975: 385). However, he also grasped the humanity that made Buster's films so compelling and wrote that they "give lessons to reality itself" (cited in Aranda, 1975: 385). Curiously, the Spaniard's gunslinger not only mocks these Keatonian traits, but America's classic film genre since the solitary Parisian gunman confronts the audience with the same loneliness and alienation portrayed by Buster in an equally chaotic and confusing setting. There are then, more than superficial facial and comic similarities between the Western and Keaton's spoofs of the genre in *Un chien andalou*.

If parody is "any cultural practice that provides a relatively polemic and allusive imitation of another cultural product or practice" (Dentith, 2000: 9), two-gun Batcheff is a suspiciously fleeting transcontextualization of the Wild West Keaton parodied in his feature *Go West* (1925) and his short, *The Paleface* (1922). However, his ascendency can best be ascertained by comparing *Un chien andalou*'s wink at the Western with one of Keaton's most delightful spoofs of the genre: *The Frozen*

North (1922). This short begins with Buster emerging from a New York subway station in a mountainous, snow-covered landscape.[15] In addition to this bizarre last stop, Buster is dressed "to kill" since he is wearing a double holster and his classic pork-pie hat now sports a point that evokes those worn by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and many cowboys. Is he (are we?) in the West or the Yukon? Buster heads straight for the saloon, the hackneyed emporium of wildness (or civilization?) so familiar to filmgoers. There he proceeds, with the help of the image of a glaring gunslinger with drawn six-guns (cut out of a poster advertising "Bull's-eye Ammunition"), to rob the establishment. Ironically, the company's cartridges are those preferred by outlaws. Buster places this cardboard "bad guy" in a saloon window to "cover" him and enters the building shouting (as the intertitle states) "Hands-up!"[16] He relieves the men of their guns and picks up the money on the gaming tables. However, when a drunkard discovers the accomplice is a fake, the jig is up for Buster. His "victims" throw him out a window and into a snow bank.

From there Buster enters what he believes to be his house only to discover a man kissing a woman he takes for his wife. In a "demonic moment" the impish bandido draws one of his huge revolvers and "plugs" the two lovers, only to discover that the woman he has just killed is not his wife. The parody of "Two-Gun Bill" Hart in this scene is obvious since his heroes were invariably virtuous good bad guys who would never kill a woman and always redeemed themselves at the end.[17] After several other misadventures, chases, and transformations, Buster ends up lying on the floor of another house and aiming a minuscule revolver at another woman (his wife?). Paradoxically, denouement of *The Frozen North* takes place in a movie theatre where the "real" Buster has fallen asleep during the film he's come to see (a Western?) and is now being awakened by the janitor. It has all been a pistolero-inspired nightmare, a marvelous optical questioning of virility, and a magnificent example of transtextual parody of the Western.

If all parody is characterized by what Linda Hutcheon calls "ironic inversion" (1985: 6), the Parisian gunslinger is certainly a distant caricatural hallucination used to suggest a comic mirage effect that, nevertheless, reflects the same purgative Western violence so poignantly mocked by Keaton. In the blink of an eye, Batcheff's quick-drawn cyclopean revolvers and their volcanic phallic muzzles and lethal sexuality cloud and question our perception while at the same time the aggressive nature of this "demonic moment" evokes the slashed eyeball at the beginning of the film. The Spanish cineastes parody by recreating a literary-cinematic allusion to a pistolero who is as recognizable as he is incongruent, but also just as oneiric, impish, and hilarious as Buster in *The Frozen North*. This Western flashback in Paris emphasizes the retrospective effect of the intertitle "16 Years Before." What is more, some 16 years before, Buñuel was becoming a disciple of the six-gun mystique and, surely, *Un chien andalou*'s pistolero's primordial predecessor. The existential self-assurance guns gave him was foregrounded artistically in *Un chien andalou* by the figure of a quintessential Western character

who not only evokes his "gun crazy" creator but also personifies Margaret Rose's definition of parody: "it combines the metafictional and the comic" (cited in Dentith, 2000: 171). This displaced "pistolero" may be the prototype that best clarifies *Un chien andalou*'s parodic process and certainly indicates Buñuel's early mastery of pyrotechnical gunplay.

When Batcheff morphs into a gunman, he suddenly personifies the frontier values of his forerunners: the physical/psychological fluctuation between civilization and barbarism, freedom and domestication, and tameness and aggression. He also becomes an icon of the same autonomy, sexuality, and social and religious irreverence represented by Hart's and Grey's pistoleros, and so captivating for their readers and audiences. These Western attributes, especially the heroic outlaw's anarchistic spirit, were also dear to the Surrealists. As Andre Breton stated, "The simplest Surrealist act consists in dashing down into the street, pistol in hand, and firing blindly, as fast as you can pull the trigger, into the crowd" (1969: 125), an inflammatory assertion Buñuel later paraphrased, "For me the best orator is he who from the first sentence pulls a pair of pistols out of his pockets and fires at the audience" (Buñuel, 2003: 35). The ideological link the Parisian gunman establishes between the artistic and sociopolitical endeavors of the Surrealists indicates he was made pyrotechnical on purpose.[18] And one wonders if Buñuel and Dalí were not also spoofing the Surrealists.[19]

The attraction Buñuel and Dalí felt toward the parodic process lies in the double nature of the genre: at once a guardian of the artistic heritage it mocks, but whose crux is caricature, subversion, and renovation. Ever in search of humor and dissidence, they surely realized that if they could emulate Keaton's ability to parody the Western and undermine its hero's six-gun mystique, they would not only legitimize themselves as artists, but *Un chien andalou* as a work of art. Herein lies their genius: in a few delirious seconds, they spoof America's archetypical genre and hero; at the same time they mock and pay homage to a parodist who made a mockery of the Western: Buster Keaton. Finally, they foresaw that the twentieth century would become an age of parody and, owing in part to this process, they too managed to become iconoclastic dream-makers helping to create an industry whose success was based on illusion and pyrotechnics, something Buñuel continued to exploit and parody in his second film.

L'Âge d'or: Parodic Pyrotechnics and Erotic Pulverization

Initially a 20-minute sequel to *Un chien andalou* entitled *La Bête andalouse* (The Andalusian Beast), *L'Âge d'or* became a 63-minute *sonore et parlant* (sound and talking) film revolving around the erotic frustrations of a man (Gaston Modot) and a young woman (Lya Lys). Significantly, episodes with firearms increased fivefold in Buñuel's first feature. Its carefully structured plot is divided into six

"prismatic articulations," inspired by the five tail sections and the venomous stinger of the scorpions seen "cavorting" in the prologue. Interestingly, this documentary footage also shows a close-up of the arachnid's pincers, appendages the intertitle defines as "instruments of aggression and *information*" (emphasis added). Given Buñuel's "provocative sense of humor and love of mystifications" (Hammond, 1997: 9), the arachnid's weaponry not only foregrounds "the violent and perverse nature of many of *L'Âge d'or*'s scenes" (Hammond, 1997: 10), but presages the inclusion of other instruments of aggression that help create the "recurring details and running jokes [that] hold the film together" (Hammond, 1997: 10). If this prologue anticipates the key thematic relationship between sexual frustration and aggression by alluding to the "hymeneal rites" of the female scorpion who kills and devours her mate after copulation without him employing his own stinger in self-defense, the steel "stingers" – especially firearms – wielded later on by the actors illumine not only the film's multiple meanings and mystifications, but the cineaste's spoofing of everything he puts within range of the camera.

Significantly, Buñuel and Dalí added a second prologue based on a bedraggled group of bandits carrying all manner of weaponry: knives, a saber, rifles, and handguns. Hammond calls them the "Scorpion Gang" and ventures that these "sonambulistic" brigands without women are "avatars of *Totem and Taboo*'s primordial brotherhood, traumatised by thoughts of the woman-hogging patriarch they've assassinated" (1997: 15), a connection that evinces their Oedipal and sexual significance. He continues by making a deft analysis of the "Mauser" carried by a lone sentinel (Juan Esplandiu) who observes the landing of four Mallorquin bishops. According to Hammond, this bolt-action rifle is a Dalinian "symbolically functioning object," since the bandit uses it as a crutch to stagger back to the hideout and warn his companions. The crutch would become "a major signifier in Dalí's paintings" (Hammond, 1997: 12) and may also connect with the pitchfork (also seen in Dalí's renditions of Millet's *L'Angelus* [1857–1859]) and the spool of rope the bandits pull through its tines, a gag Hammond calls an "anguishing onanistic ritual" (1997: 15). He makes no further interpretations of the bandits' arms, yet knowing Buñuel, it is hard to imagine they are simply props for men who are "clearly the wretched of the earth, vagabonds, pariahs" (Hammond, 1997: 13).

The hideout scenes reveal the brigands are in a bad way; in Spanish, *están hechos polvo* (literally, "they're beaten into dust," i.e., exhausted). In case there is any doubt, one states, "Je suis foutou" (I'm wiped out, or I'm screwed). This is the beginning, as we shall see, of a running joke based on these armed, but "screwed" pariahs, and "mystified" throughout *L'Âge d'or* by the ribald meanings of the word "dust" – *polvo* – meaning "a fuck" in Spanish.

Hammond elucidates this prologue's sociohistorical importance by clarifying the choice of the toponym "Mallorquin" to describe the bishops. Apparently, for Buñuel and Dalí, the island "connoted all that was feudal, God-fearing, reactionary" (Hammond, 1997: 18). It also suggests a geopolitical backdrop because dictators

Miguel Primo de Rivera and Benito Mussolini had signed a pact ceding the Italians a naval base on Mallorca in exchange for Mussolini's support of Spain's claim on Tangiers (Hammond, 1997: 18). Even though the cineastes had had considerable contact with the remnants of feudalism, its pariahs and religious erotophobia in Spain, this invasive motif indicates *L'Âge d'or*'s aggressive nature and their desire to be surrealist intellectual revolutionaries.

A closer examination of the bandits' weaponry furthers our understanding of their sociopolitical and sexual significance and how the rebellious cineastes used arms to augment *L'Âge d'or*'s subversive impact. One handgun is an antique flintlock pistol that is drawn by a bandit when the sentinel returns to the hideout. Obviously, these men fear attack. Another handgun is the same Lefaucheux-type revolver seen in *Un chien andalou*. (Did Buñuel add one of Batcheff's props to his collection in 1929 and use it again in *L'Âge d'or*, or use his own?) These two handguns are a subtle reinforcement of the hand/onanism motif that permeates both films, although in *L'Âge d'or* Buñuel focuses on his characters' fingers to suggest masturbation. Unlike the other actors who fire their weapons, the brigands never squeeze the triggers of their phallic arms. The long guns are all Mausers (Buñuel had one in his collection) that date from the late 1800s and were standard issue in the Spanish army and used with deadly effect in the war with the United States in 1898 and by both sides during the Civil War. The director had to have recognized that this "collection" of antique and newer weapons would function as symbols of the Scorpion Gang's downtrodden condition. They also allude to Spain's long tradition of rural banditry, social unrest, and sexual repression. Although threatened by the Mallorquin invaders, the bandits seem incapable of defending themselves. Before abandoning their hideout, the "foutou" bandit deliriously calls for a change in arsenal, one that includes "accordions, hippopotami, wrenches … and paintbrushes." Apparently, he senses their debility and dilapidated arms will be worthless in whatever awaits them. Or is this, as Hammond notes, just another Buñuelian/Dalinian gag, given that five of the bandits were painters in real life? Or should we perceive that paintbrushes (and cameras) can be marvelous and dangerous weapons if wielded by artists who are free?

The brigands begin to escape (in Spanish: *poner pies en polvorosa*, literally, to put your feet in the dust) and one by one bite the dust (in Spanish: *morder el polvo*) without firing a shot, without burning any powder (in Spanish: *quemar pólvora*). Like the skeletal remains of the bishops now seen, they are heading for putrefaction, that is, both the prelates and the pariahs are being reduced to dust (in Spanish: *reducir a polvo*). These "landless labourers" (Hammond, 1997: 13) and the rotting ecclesiastics not only represent a hackneyed leitmotif in Spanish arts and letters (equality in death), but evoke a biblical (Genesis 3:19) association: "For you are dust, And to dust your shall return" (in Spanish: *Pues polvo eres, Y al polvo volverás*). These "landless," "womanless," and "dusty" men whose phallic guns are dragged about, kicking up dust, and never fired replicate the impotency and defenselessness of the male scorpions in the first prologue. They might as well be toting

hippopotami or paintbrushes! Clearly, the Spanish cineastes not only created this prologue to show the bandits are "foutous" (in Spanish: *jodidos*), but to pun and parody by cleverly combining firearms with the multiple meanings of the Spanish word *polvo*, leading the spectator linguistically and subconsciously from the second articulation to a much more explicitly "dirty/dusty" third one.

For most spectators the significance of *polvo*/dust (death = putrefaction = fear of God/equality) is fairly evident. However, for Spanish speakers, the word *polvo* is charged with eroticism and Buñuel and Dalí certainly "dusted" *L'Âge d'or*'s plot with it. As mentioned, in Spanish the substantive *polvo*, as in *un polvo*, means "a copulation," "a fuck," and the expression *echar un polvo* means "to fornicate, get laid." From a sexual and anti-clerical perspective, the cineastes have literally pulverized (in Spanish: *hacer polvo*) the celibate ("dustless") prelates while the "screwed" pariahs are also becoming dust (in Spanish: *convertirse en polvo*) on this barren landscape, never to be seen again. All of this *polvo* (or lack thereof) foreshadows the libidinal frustrations of the protagonists who are "introduced" shortly after the disembarkation of a second wave of Mallorquins (a governor, military officers, priests, nuns, bourgeois ladies and gentlemen, etc.) who have come to found the Imperial City of Rome. This ludicrous event is interrupted by a lascivious female cry, while the camera now focuses on Modot and Lys rolling in a wallow attempting to *echar un polvo* (fornicate).

The Mallorquins separate them before they can have intercourse, and Lys is led off by the nuns (the Church) and Modot by the authorities (the State). Obviously, this "Mallorquin Gang" represents Spain's oligarchy and, by extension, the country's *ancien régime*, which – witness the bandits and couple – has kept the Spanish people in a downtrodden, asexual state for centuries. Yet, because of this repression, Spain was in fact a powder keg in the 1930s (in Spanish: *era un polvorín*). This historical allusion brings to mind another "dusty" Spanish expression: *Aquellos polvos traen estos lodos* (those dusts bring about these muds), that is, the idea that what has occurred in the past – again, witness the pariahs and couple – causes suffering today (You reap what you sow).

Significantly, this Mallorquin invasion was *L'Âge d'or*'s original starting point, an episode whose plot creates, "a type of hysterical parody of a high society comedy à la Lubitsch" (Gubern and Hammond, 2009: 30). However, as has been seen, this spoof is initiated with the second articulation's incendiary ridicule of the Church, allusions to banditry and social unrest, and punning with *polvo*. The "dusty" bandits and their supposedly phallic yet impotent firearms lead the audience to a re-viewing of Spain's oligarchy's historic "violation" (screwing) of their own country and then to a subversive wallow charged with eroticism, irreverence, and political discord. It should be noted that for Buñuel, the word "cineaste" meant someone who could not only direct, but who was truly adept at *découpage*, what he called the "supreme instant of segmentation" (Gubern and Hammond, 2009: 27–28). As shall be seen, in *L'Âge d'or*, armed men signal transitions from one sequence or articulation to the next.

But what those who knew Spanish in the audience during *L'Âge d'or*'s first (and few) screenings in Paris surely realized was that this "filthy" love scene is what is known in their language as a *revolcón* (a sexual tryst, a roll in the hay). In fact, the entire sequence is a ribald visual pun based on the Spanish infinitive *revolcarse* (to roll on the ground, to wallow) along with other "dirty" expressions and connotations – like *revolcón* – derived from the verb. Paradoxically, this filmic wallow – *revolcadero* in Spanish – is the site of the first of several frustrated *revolcones* in *L'Âge d'or*. And naturally and hilariously, there is no "dust" to be seen or had in any wallow. The Spanish speakers in Paris who saw the film must have been rolling over in laughter (*revolcarse de risa*) during this scene, as were the cineastes when they created it.[20] Nevertheless, this unfinished *revolcón* accentuates the sense of seething sexual frustration and explosive sociopolitical unrest – emphasized here by takes of molten lava – that permeates *L'Âge d'or*'s first two articulations and becomes even more pyrotechnical later on. These incendiary visual gags and puns based on the words *polvo*, *pólvora*, *polvorín*, and *revolcón*, along with the parodies they create of Spain's *ancien régime* in the 1930s, would have delighted Golden Age poets Luis de Góngora and Francisco de Quevedo, a nod to the title the young cineastes chose for their first feature. More importantly, between firearms and "dusts," Buñuel was well on his way to becoming a master *polvorista* (pyrotechnician).[21]

Firearms do not reappear until the "fifth prismatic articulation," which begins with the intertitle: "At his magnificent Roman estate, the Marquis of X prepares for his guests." However, this episode contains one of *L'Âge d'or*'s "most violent and perverse" (Hammond, 1997: 92) sequences, that of the gamekeeper who guns down his own son with his double-barreled shotgun, an infanticide that is followed by the suicide of Modot's boss, the Minister of the Interior, who shoots himself, a gag whose violence Buñuel decided not to show. Both episodes confirm Buñuel's assertion that, "Sexual instincts and the meaning of death form the film's substance" (cited in García Buñuel, 1985: 82).

According to Hammond, the infanticide sequence was the last one shot. Buñuel also substituted a boy of "cretinous countenance" (Hammond, 1997: 42) for the daughter called for in the original script. Not surprisingly, he may also have wanted to play the role of the father/shooter, but opted for another painter friend, Manuel Ángeles Ortiz (Hammond, 1997: 42–43). Was this "demonic moment" even too brutal for him? The British critic also opines that Buñuel and Dalí combined their talents to create this infanticide. Certainly, it is as much an exposition of the rebellious young painter's problems with his father and his Oedipal obsession with William Tell as it is a Buñuelian utilization of his own frustrations and venatic experiences. More importantly, the hunter and his shotgun form the basis of a barrage of cross-cuts between the events on the mansion's grounds and the party taking place in the building's opulent interior, obviously an opposition between the *beau monde* and the proletariat fraught with seething social and sexual violence, death, and incendiary intentions.

An analysis of the cynegetic motifs helps elucidate a series of contrasting parallel scenes that articulate this shotgun sequence. The hunter's return begins as a happy one. He greets two servants and his son runs out of a doorway and the two embrace warmly. The father leans his weapon on a chair, sits down and the boy climbs on his lap where they examine the game bag. It is empty. Ominously, and like the bandits, the hunter has not pulled the trigger (in Spanish: *apretar el gatillo*). From this point on, the cineastes create another series of verbal and visual puns based on Spanish cynegetic vernacular replete with ribald connotations. For example, the expression *dar/pegar un gatillazo* means a misfire, but it is also used figuratively to indicate a man's gun (penis) has either "fired" too quickly (premature ejaculation) or has not fired at all (impotency/frustration), the latter being the bandits' case and, for the moment, the gamekeeper's also. Another vernacular expression, *dar gusto al dedo* (literally to give pleasure to the finger), means to shoot or pull the trigger many times. While, as mentioned, many of *L'Âge d'or*'s other characters symbolically masturbate by "giving themselves pleasure" with their digits, the hunter has not pulled the trigger nor burned any powder, even though he is also a *gatillo caliente* (literally a hot trigger), a hunter who likes to squeeze the trigger, which he will become shortly.

The camera cuts to the mansion where a servant "gives pleasure to his fingers" by polishing a phallic-looking crystal decanter that is also empty, and a maid is killed by an explosion that shoots flames out the kitchen door. More gags based on *gatillazos* and pyrotechnics. The guests remain unperturbed. Outside again, the son swats a cigarette his father is rolling and runs into some high grass and flowers, falls down, waves to his father, and runs away. This playfulness "ignites" a deadly hunt, as in what follows there is an "exchange" of 13 long, medium, and close-up shots between the father and son in which the aroused phallic hunter takes aim as he lips *hijo de puta* (son of a bitch), fires, and "boom" the boy "bites the dust." In the thirteenth shot he delivers a *coup de grace* with the second barrel, as if his son were a wounded prey. The close-up of the "sudden impact" of this second shot nearly blows the child out of the frame. No wonder Buñuel did not want this part.

Meanwhile, the partygoers have heard the shots and gather on the balcony to observe the scene below. More indifference, although this cynegetic infanticide is another "demonic moment" designed to grab the audience's attention and confront the viewer with purgative violence and sudden death. The camera then shows the gamekeeper standing by his dead son with his shotgun under his arm and rolling a new cigarette, a sort of paternal Grim Reaper who has disdainfully extinguished his son's life, a scene reminiscent of Valdés Leal's famous painting, *In ictu oculi* (In the Twinkling of an Eye, 1672). It was a companion canvas to the Baroque painter's *Finis Gloriae Mundi* (The End of Worldly Glory, 1672) and evoked in the second articulation by the image of the putrefied bishops. More parodic allusions to Spain's Golden Age. Standing on the gamekeeper's right is one of the servants, who watches the gesticulations of the father apparently explaining the cause of the infanticide. Between them and squatting is the other servant, who is

holding up the dead boy's head, a ghastly pietà-like scene that terminates this brutal and irreverent sequence: "And to dust you shall return."

Once again guns and death lead to what happens next, as "upstairs" Modot now appears at the party shouldering a cocktail dress on a hanger, the same one Lya Lys is wearing. Obviously, this stalker's "game bag" is also empty, which leads to more violence. When the young woman's mother spills wine on him, Modot swats her face, a slap that sounds like the gunshots just heard. One "demonic moment" has led to another.[22]

Buñuel's familiarity with hunting and its classic firearm, the double-barreled shotgun, gave him a measure of confidence that was brought to bear when creating and articulating these scenes. The deeply ingrained feelings assimilated while afield in his youth – death and putrefaction, barbarism (freedom?) and civilization (repression?), power and impotence, innocence and malevolence, etc. – resurface and are synthesized in these "demonic moments," all meant to confront the spectator with mankind's latent bestiality, venatic instincts, and explosive sexuality. Their shocking power not only had its origins in Buñuel's youth, but also dates from the genesis of the seventh art and its own use of pyrotechnics. Buñuel was surely predisposed to continue this filmic arms race, but, very much like Keaton, endeavored to parody his and our fascination with pyrotechnics.

Returning to the party, the young couple escapes to the garden and are again seen trying to *echar un polvo*. This *revolcón* is frustrated by a servant who notifies Modot that the Minister of the Interior needs to speak to him, a man now shown in his office putting a small semi-automatic pistol in his desk drawer. In the phone conversation that follows, the politician accuses Modot of causing the deaths of many innocent people, which is reinforced by intercut scenes of the masses in revolt. Again, the country is a social and sexual *polvorín* (powder keg). The minister pulls out the pistol and, although the screen goes black, a shot is heard. The blank screen is followed by two parodic images of the aftermath: (i) in this explosive world, the minister has blown himself to the ceiling; and (ii) a "still life" depicting his desk, empty shoes, and gun on the floor while the telephone receiver swings from the side of the desk. *L'amour fou*, "demonic moments" – infanticide, homicide, suicide – that is, primal motifs and pyrotechnics anchor *L'Âge d'or*'s fifth articulation.

This gag is interesting for other reasons. First, the minister's pistol evokes the "pequeña Browning" Buñuel carried when he was an adolescent (was it the same one now used as a prop?). Secondly, the off-screen gunshot would be used again in *Nazarín* (1958), when the priest, after failing to intercede in a labor dispute at a railroad construction site, is shown walking away and "boom," someone pays the price for the Nazarín's naivety. Also, although previous Buñuelian firearms and gunshots alluded to the tyrannical function of society, in this gag, a gun is fired for the first time for obvious political reasons. Finally, it completes the panoply of firearms – antique flintlock pistol, Lefaucheux revolver, Mausers, double-barreled shotgun, and modern semi-automatic pistol – Buñuel employed as symbolically

functioning objects in *L'Âge d'or*. With them he pulverizes modern society by surreptitiously replicating and criticizing "the proliferating array of guns that would appear throughout history" (Kelly, 2004: 28). Gunpowder and guns: "Those dusts bring today's muds."

Firearms represent a tremendous evolutionary paradox and one that is especially pertinent when analyzing Buñuel's cinematography. They not only emblematize mankind's development and the birth of civilization, but are one of the "devices [that] fertilized the long slow growth of feelings of rights and entitlements that would blossom into democracy" (Kelly, 2004: 77), that is, the individual and social freedoms that were so dear to Buñuel. However, as he shows us repeatedly, firearms were also capable of generating retrogression into the savagery whence human beings had come. Like fireworks, cinema is a pyrotechnical art whose purpose is not destruction but illusion. Buñuel, the young pistolero and *pirómano*, would use firearms and his experience with them to ignite his and our imaginations by projecting meanings not against the darkness of the sky but on the silver screen and in the recesses of our minds, and thus became a master *polvorista* whose works illuminate the long pageant of joy and terror that is Humanity's heritage.[23]

Notes

1 All translations are the authors' own.

2 These films were: *El gran calavera* (The Great Madcap, 1949), *Una mujer sin amor* (A Woman without Love, 1951), and *Simón del desierto* (Simon of the Desert, 1965). Buñuel also used handguns while shooting *Las Hurdes*, aka *Tierra sin pan* (Land without Bread, 1933) and *El ángel exterminador* (The Exterminating Angel, 1962).

3 In 1965 the director stated in an interview: "I have lots of guns at home and I load my own bullets. I'm a gunsmith" (cited in Aranda, 1975: 409). Buñuel's wife, Jeanne Rucar de Buñuel, tells this story about her husband: "The only thing he spent money on was his pistol collection …" (1990: 106).

4 Smith and Wesson is a well-known American arms manufacturer, especially famous for its powerful, high-quality handguns. The .44 magnum revolver Dirty Harry (Clint Eastwood) made famous is a S&W Model 29. Buñuel had a particular preference for S&W handguns (which probably dates from his childhood), as he had 11 of them in his collection.

5 Samuel Colt was not only the inventor of legendary handguns, but a master at marketing who struck a "democratic" chord with his clientele by engraving the following motto on the cylinders of his iconic revolvers: "No matter what your size, I shall equalize."

6 Most of the guns in Buñuel's collection were, in fact, collectible pieces, both as antiques representative of the history of firearms, and as pieces produced by manufacturers – Colt, Mannlicher, Valmet-Lathi, Star, Astra, etc. – known to produce high-quality firearms.

7 Ortega y Gasset indicates the "reality" of hunting when he writes, "When … modern man goes out hunting what he's doing is not fictitious, and is not a farce; it is, essentially,

the same thing Paleolithic man did" (1962: 98). And Shepard states, "Nothing that men do comes so close to fulfilling the promise that the imagination builds in youth as hunting" (1973: 141).

8 On the importance of mankind's cynegetic origins, Paul Shepard writes, "All major human characteristics – size, metabolism, sexual and reproductive behavior, intuition, intelligence – had come into existence and were oriented to the hunting life" (1973: 7). And Ortega y Gasset states, "This essence of effort and adventure that hunting in its best style inherently has, has made it always be considered as a great pedagogy, as one of the preferable methods to form one's character" (1962: 23).

9 Although Sontag mentions many cineastes and Surrealists in her study, Buñuel's name does not appear.

10 Interestingly, the expression Buñuel uses for "quick draw" in Spanish is "saque reflejo." The word "reflejo," of course, means "reflex," something that indicates a spontaneous act or reaction and akin to the automatism Surrealism's artists wished to produce in their works.

11 In the early stages of his career Buñuel had fallen under Keaton's spell and wrote, "In Keaton expression is as modest as a bottle … But the bottle and Keaton's face have infinite points of view" (cited in Aranda, 1975: 384). On Hart, Kozarski states, "his face was an extraordinary icon … it was a face created to express dark emotions" (cited in Oldham, 1996: 6). The facial expression of his Spanish-Parisian descendent in *Un chien andalou*'s "Sixteen Years Before" reflects the same hatred and fury. James Agee places Keaton's face, "with that of Lincoln as one of America's first archetypes … of a fine, tranquil and sometimes oneiric beauty" (cited in Oldham, 1996: 6).

12 On Buñuel, Hammond opines, "His first two films are an homage to silent comedy; to the oneiric metalogic and concrete irrationality of Langdon and Keaton" (1997: 16).

13 On the list of his "Antique Firearms" Buñuel typed "Lefouche," not Lefaucheux. His revolver was undoubtedly one of the many copies of the original revolver. The Lefaucheux was extremely successful because it was the first repeating firearm to use metallic cartridges.

14 In *Conversaciones con Luis Buñuel*, Max Aub says to his friend: "In reality, the fundamental theme of your art is violence" (1985: 151). The filmmaker's answer is: "Sí."

15 Much of this paragraph is based on Oldham's analysis of *The Frozen North*. She writes, "Keaton spoofs three silent-screen contemporaries, each with easily recognizable features that became their trademarks: William S. Hart, Theda Bara, and Erich von Stroheim. A little Ben Turpin is thrown in, and because of the locale, there are echoes of *Nanook of the North* (1922), the 'father' of the film documentary" (1996: 251). Oldham also offers this critique: "the film misses the one driving force that should give it depth and anchorage: the 'little man' figure against the world" (1996: 251). Batcheff certainly has the air of "a little man against the world," but like Buster in *The Frozen North*, this theme is not sufficiently developed.

16 Buñuel emulates this classic command in *Un chien andalou*, which also suggests he had the Western in mind when creating this scene. He explained: "The character … threatening with his guns, forces him to put his 'Hands up!' and even though the other obeys, he empties his two revolvers into him" (cited in Aranda, 1975: 92).

17 Keaton wrote in his memoirs, *My Wonderful World of Slapstick* (1982), "Bill [Hart] did not speak to me for two years after he saw that picture" (cited in Oldham, 1996: 255). And Oldham opines, "Keaton could not understand Hart's reaction since he felt 'you

can only burlesque successes, never flops' and he 'judged top performers for their ability to laugh at themselves'" (1996: 255).

18 Gubern and Hammond call *L'Âge d'or*, "the most genuine cinematic declaration of the movement's [Surrealism's] revolutionary objectives and attitudes" (2009: 44).

19 According to Gubern and Hammond, "Breton appeared partially prefigured in *Un chien andalou* by Pierre Batcheff brandishing revolvers" (2009: 18).

20 What Buñuel wrote about his unfinished book, also titled *Un chien andalou* – "it made Dalí and me piss with laughter" (cited in Aranda, 1975: 84) – suggests humor was also a mainstay for *L'Âge d'or*.

21 The cineastes continue this running pun/gag on *polvo* later in the film when a young man comes out of the door of a sidewalk café and contentedly dusts himself off. Obviously, he's the only person in the film who's gotten *un polvo*, that is, relieved himself sexually. Dalí almost certainly alludes to *L'Âge d'or's* "dusty/ribald" gags in a letter he wrote to Buñuel with this suggestion: "In the same way there's the man covered with dust [*empolvado*] there can be a bloodied man …" (cited in Sánchez Vidal, 1988: 317).

22 Buñuel must have been particularly pleased with these shotgun blasts in *L'Âge d'or* since in his later films he (re)created a series of similar "demonic shotgun moments," and continued to charge these gags with ferocious social and religious criticism: The cardinal in *Le Charme discrèt de la bourgeoisie* (The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie, 1972) who delivers "the last rites" to a moribund gardener by shooting him with his own shotgun after the prelate realizes the man had poisoned his parents years before; the randy old country gentleman hunter in *Le Journal d'une femme de chambre* (Diary of a Chambermaid,1963*)* who blasts a butterfly with his shotgun, another sign of sexual frustration and aristo impotency; or the two hunters in *La Voie lactée* (The Milky Way, 1969) who shoot a rosary the Virgin has brought to Earth, more Buñuelian irreverence, parody and pyrotechnics.

23 Books on humanity's evolution and its relationship to hunting and firearms are legion. Besides José Ortega y Gasset's lengthy essay whose English title is given here (1972), Robert Ardrey's *Hunting Hypothesis* (1976) makes fascinating reading and food for thought. Erich Hobusch's book *Fair Game* (1980) is an excellent source for anyone interested in the history of hunting and its myths and iconography. David Peterson (2000) and Matt Cartmill (1993) also give solid insights, and contrasting views, on the modern hunt. On weaponry and its history, Greener's study (2010) would be a good place to start.

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4

Buñuel's Critique of Nationalism

A Migratory Aesthetic?

Mieke Bal

In this chapter I make a distinction between Buñuel's well-known transnationalism and the critique of nationalism this implies, on the one hand, and what I call his "migratory aesthetic" on the other. When I was invited to participate in this volume, the brief I was given was to reflect on the obvious fact that Buñuel was a figure of enduring exile who problematized the idea of the national in his films as much as in his life experience. I was asked to bring the concept I have been working on of late, "migratory aesthetics," to bear on Buñuel's cinema. My aim in offering the latter concept is double. Through its deployment, I seek to enhance the political relevance of Buñuel's work for today's Western societies, so troubled by a new nationalism grimly represented by the erection of walls, the performance of interethnic violence, and the rise of right-wing governments. This perspective pertains to "preposterous history." With this term I indicate a reversed, anachronistic historical perspective that takes the present as its starting point. To make this case for a preposterous history, I invoke the work of a contemporary artist as an entrance into Buñuel's work, and, as I will explain below, I do not a priori endorse the usual division of that work into surrealist, Mexican, and French films. I also attempt to argue that the concept of migratory aesthetics helps us make distinctions on a basis different from conventional categories of genre (documentary, fiction) or style (realist, surrealist). In my attempt to explain the difference between the two concepts, migratory aesthetic and transnationalism, I single out two cinematic devices, both based on discrepancies or incongruities: the mismatch between sound and image, and the incomplete tracking shot, in interaction with the close-up.[1]

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Displacement, Misplacement

A cow, chicken, dog or other domestic animals taken literally as such, hence, appearing in a bourgeois bedroom, walking through a living room, or entering a house as if it belonged there: this emblem of surrealist filmmaking recurs, not only in other Buñuel films than *L'Âge d'or* (The Golden Age, 1930) where it made its spectacular appearance (Figure 4.1), but also in a 2002 video installation that is neither particularly inspired by surrealist aesthetics, nor preoccupied with Buñuel's usual targets (the bourgeoisie, the church, or sexually perverted patriarchy), Eija-Liisa Ahtila's three-channel video installation *The House*. There, a young woman – critically but dubiously typecast as schizophrenic – is slowly losing grip on her domestic normalcy when the world begins to enter her private space. On the sound of a loud television news program suggestive of disaster, a cow silently walks into the house, easily passing through a doorframe that should be too narrow for it (Figure 4.2).[2]

Different as this work is from Buñuel's films, the misplaced bovine is a sign of affiliation. So is, in Ahtila's work, the mixture of Finnish landscapes in a New York bedroom, followed by images shot in Africa, Benin (*Hour of Prayer*, 2005). The misplaced animal is, however, just a motif, a semantic unit that may support a theme, but which neither has storytelling power nor stylistic weight in itself. But as such, it is too striking to ignore. This becomes even more pronounced when we see a connection of a different kind, within Buñuel's *oeuvre*, between the domestic



Figure 4.1 The cow in *L'Âge d'or*. Vicomte de Noailles.

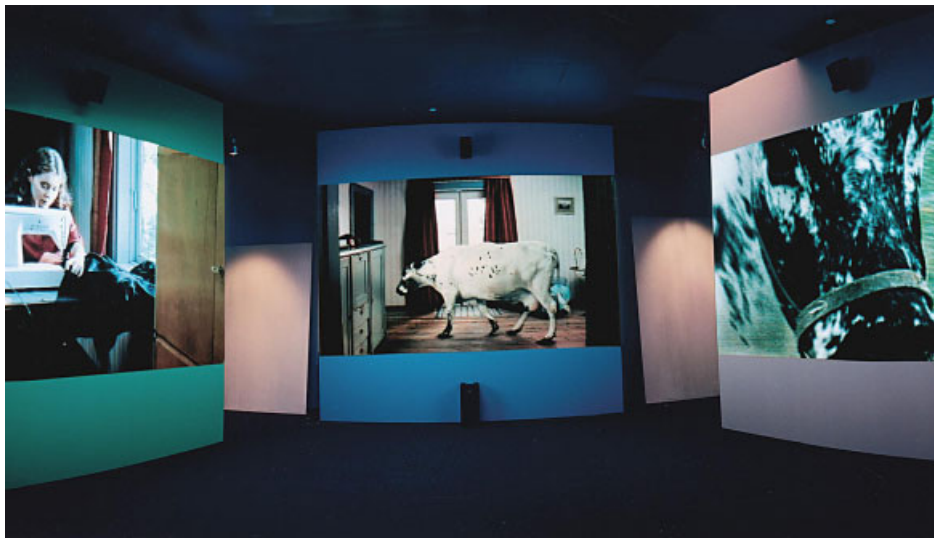


Figure 4.2 Eija-Liisa Ahtila's *The House* installation (2002). Eija-Liisa Ahtila.

cow and the totally realist chicken in domestic spaces in *Los olvidados* (The Forgotten Ones, aka The Young and the Damned, 1950). Displaced, or misplaced? Why is it "abnormal" in one film and "normal" in another? Is this where two streams of Buñuel's films diverge – the surrealist and the realist ones, as is generally assumed?

It seems a reasonable assumption. However, Ahtila's insistent questioning of what is "mad" and what is not, in *The House*, suggests wariness of such hasty generic distinctions. Something is misplaced, but whether it is the cow or the sound – in other words, whether the schizophrenia lies with the woman or the medium – is less clear. In Buñuel's case, this questioning concerns the generic divisions of his work. The cow in *L'Âge d'or* is surreal, the chicken in *Los olvidados* part of a realist depiction of poverty, are they not? In the poor neighborhoods in Mexico City, the coexistence of animals and humans is also a trace of the rural background. Hence, here it is "normal" – unless we consider, as perhaps we should, that poverty itself is surreal. I contend that this is what Buñuel does with the misplaced domestic animals: persuade us that both must have the same representational status. One cannot change the rules of the game while the game is going on. This point is driven home when a traveling shot moves from the stoning of the blind man to a black hen standing at some distance, coming to a halt that would seem arbitrary otherwise, as if unmotivated and simply compelled by a lack of space.

It is in this exterior scene that the animal seems most misplaced. The square where the violence takes place is large enough. Stopping at a black animal is insisting that another generic distinction does not hold: that between documentary and fiction, realism and symbolic foregrounding. Perhaps, then, rather than working

with genres or styles, we should look at small elements that serve as gearshifts. In the case of the domestic animal becoming too domestic, the gearshift between Buñuel's surrealist aesthetic in the films critical of the bourgeoisie on the one hand, and his realist and documentary style in the indictments of the misery of poverty on the other, is that literalization of the idea of the domestic animal. Real or surreal, documentary or fictitious? – that, it so often seems, is the question. Once we see it that way, the motif is no longer just that; it becomes a shifter – in the linguistic sense – between the relation the viewer can entertain with the images on screen. Throwing us out of generic conventions, it compels us to look in more detail.

The cow in Ahtila's acclaimed installation alerted me to two very different kinds of connection that help me articulate what I aim to suggest about the work of the surrealist-realist, satirical, political, documentarist fiction-maker, Spanish-American-Mexican-French director. Like the misplaced animals, both connections take the form of discrepancies. This is, first, the discrepancy between image and sound – a signature aesthetic principle of both artists. Second, it is the deployment of discrepant space, a sense of narrowness, most visible when both filmmakers use cinematic devices and seem to "fail" at them. The former discrepancy indicates a schizophrenia of the medium, rather than of the figures on the screen, a "split personality" both artists endeavor to use as devices for the promotion of a different kind of spectatorial posture than the usual illusionistic one. The latter hints at a "hand-held" quality of the distribution of space in the world. The director visibly and even ostensibly takes responsibility for the way we conceive of the availability of space.

Buñuel uses devices meant to extend plausible diegetic space in order to demonstrate the lack of it. He already does this in *L'Âge d'or*, when the long garden labyrinth is literally cut short; or when the men running through the rubble almost fall into the abyss, in a landscape that seconds before looked endlessly expansive. Ahtila makes shrewd use of the art form of video installation to lock viewers into insufficient space. Below, I will suggest that it is in these two discrepancies that we are best advised to look for Buñuel's political potential today, as manifestations of the "migratory aesthetics," as I call it, in the work of this permanent exile, transnational filmmaker, and severe critic of nationalism, including of the nationalist rhetoric inherent in Mexican cinema at the time.[3]

My argument in what follows is this. Underlying art that matters for today, in this respect – that is, art that contributes to a better social-political space – is a dialectic between recognition and innovation. This makes cinema, with its heavy burden of commercial viability in turn based on recognizability, a medium of choice for such reflections. It is also why Buñuel juggles between (extreme) realism and strong Surrealism in his films. Sound is recognizable – we can identify it. But when it shows up out of place, it becomes a tool for estrangement. Space, in everyday life naturalized as being "just there," in cinema must be conquered, painstakingly traversed by a camera that needs all its technical ploys to fit it. These

two devices are key to understanding Buñuel's work across national borders beyond the thematic level as well as historical divisions. The bond – not equation – between aesthetics and politics that underlies my reflection here is not the one most frequently alleged when Buñuel's transnationalism is invoked. But transnationalism is not the same as migratory aesthetics; it is neither by definition aesthetic, nor "migratory" in the sense I conceptualize that term.[4]

It is not, in other words, with the representation of Napoleon's invasion of Spain, accompanied by images, among others, from Goya's paintings of the executions of May 3, 1808, at the beginning of *Le Fantôme de la liberté* (The Phantom of Liberty, 1974) that we are politically moved. Nor does this happen when that film ends with an execution. Or when the colonel in *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* (The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie, 1972) challenges Fernando Rey's character by flinging national clichés into his face, to which the ambassador of the transparently Latin-American, imaginary republic Miranda answers with the violence that overly confirms the cliché he is protesting. Buñuel's transnationalist imaginary, interesting and at times gripping as it is, does not make his work specifically politically relevant for today. It is not that kind of overt, albeit brilliantly performed critique that suffices, today, to subvert the nationalism that still, or again, pervades European culture. Neither representation nor critique suffices to achieve what the medium of the moving image is eminently capable of achieving: to move and transform, rather than persuade us. The filmmaker could not help it: the transnational castings, the hilarious anti-nationalistic, anti-bourgeois, and anti-clerical jokes end up, with time, becoming a discourse – not an effect of political persuasion, even less of the desired change in attitude. I seek to find the political force of art somewhere else, in the domain of *affect*. Affect, not as sentiment, emotion, or feeling, but as an intensity that moves us, without telling us precisely in what direction to move.

In particular, to make that point I look at the seams or mismatches, hence, discrepancies, between sound and image and between cinematic movements and actual space. These discrepancies seem a good place to start. In a sense, this is an area where the figurative art of narrative (and anti-narrative) cinema turns into abstraction. For, to put it bluntly, the political of art must stay aloof of politics in order to be effective. Abstraction is meant here in the Deleuzian sense, not as devoid of figuration but as the potential of new figurations.[5]

Migratory Aesthetics as a Cultural Politic

In order to shift the focus slightly from internationalism, let me first explain the term that is central to this essay, "migratory aesthetics." Even only in terms of narrative subject matter – a domain I will discard from consideration on the grounds of its discursive nature – the most "migratory" of Buñuel's films are not

those that explore his adopted country Mexico, and seek out its poverty, violence, or the Catholic culture of perversion – elements he must have been familiar enough with from his Spanish upbringing – for a critical audio-visual analysis. It is, rather, in the films where "travel" or movement from place to place, displacement and out-of-place-ness are at the heart of the stories that I see an imagination let loose, an unmoored wildness of "imagings," which could be related to the artist's own compulsion to change places. In this sense, *Subida al cielo* (Ascent to Heaven, aka Mexican Bus Ride, 1951) and *La ilusión viaje en tranvía* (Illusion Travels by Streetcar, 1953) are more "migratory" than, say, *El río y la muerte* (The River and Death, 1954) or even, to anticipate a later argument, *Los olvidados*. Whereas the latter two films depict a vision of Mexico clearly informed by eyes astounded by the extremity of what they see, coming from an elsewhere not represented in itself, the former two thematize travel as a liberating and subversive force. The latter, that is, pertain to a transnational imaginary of the ethnographic kind; the former to a migratory aesthetic that involves the self, or maker.

For, importantly, and as a first condition for migratory aesthetics, the first distinction is that between a look from outside in, versus a participatory engagement. The second difference is that between an aesthetic based on movement and displacement as a spring from which the imagination emanates enriched, versus critique as a thematic center, with the risk of complacency, simplification, and judgmental moralism. This formulation already intimates that, in my view, migratory aesthetics is a positive, creative force, an endorsement of a (potentially risky) participation in difference, not a situation that calls for (political) judgment. And, no more than in motifs such as the domestic animal taken literally, is it best elaborated in narrative plots. The reason is that these elements are incidental, anecdotal, and discursive, and, as such, they may persuade or not, but they do not offer the experience of a different aesthetic. Again, looking at Buñuel through eyes awakened by contemporary art helps understand not only how the filmmaker practices migratory aesthetics, but importantly also, how his work helps us understand that concept better.[6]

Although Ahtila's work invariably touches us with issues that have political ramifications, and that are in a sense close to Buñuel's preoccupations – such as colonialism, gender politics, and the confining streamlining of the imagination – even in the face of the most blatantly political issues, she will not pronounce. The ways she does not pronounce can sensitize us to the need to do so for ourselves, but *to avoid doing so hastily*. The key issue, here, is time, or temporalization; the slow-down not *in* the films but that the films produce. It is for this reason I invoke her work to assess Buñuel's migratory aesthetics at its most incisive.

As many have argued, cinema is a time-based art; an art in and of time. Laura Mulvey's 2006 study makes this double temporality particularly clear. In "good," politically effective films, the time needed to watch a movie postpones our judgment. The moment of doubt, not of certainty, is where political affect can emerge. Time, then, rather than motif or plot, is a first tool for soliciting political affect.

Elsewhere (see reference in note 7), I have argued for the conflicted centrality of time in migratory culture, and one only needs to invoke *El ángel exterminador* (The Exterminating Angel, 1962) to understand that time can be a matter of life or death, its slowness devastating as much as its fastness can kill. The deployment of what Paul Sandro, in a Deleuzian analysis, calls the use of "bad repetition" in that film – both on the level of plot and in iconography – is essentially a matter of time. Moreover, not coincidentally, in today's film theory the interest in time goes hand in hand with an interest in the tactile, frequently confused with the haptic. To put it succinctly, time inscribes the moving image in "life," and tactility confirms that "liveness."[7]

This tactility militates against the social fragmentation and isolation that individualism produces. It also inscribes the maker into the film's universe. In *Creative Evolution*, a book devoted to the enigma of life, French philosopher Henri Bergson wrote something to this effect in the chapter on "The Endurance of Life." In his life-long effort to theorize life, time, and the world in terms of a continuum, he kept a near-obsessive focus on continuity, the impossibility of fragmentation, and the need to conceptualize wholeness, in a way that makes sense of such diverse tendencies of Buñuel's to construct characters out of groups and to work with exceptionally long takes, avoiding the fragmentation of montage. The French philosopher wrote about the difference of what he calls the "real whole": "The systems we cut out within it [the real whole] would properly speaking, not then be *parts* at all; they would be *partial views* of the whole" (1983 [1907]: 31). As is well known, Bergson revolutionized the current conceptions of time. He replaced measurable, dividable time with continuous duration. The tension between fragment and detail is like that between part and partiality in Bergson's passage. Apply this tension to time, as Bergson is wont to do, and the key to cinema and video art emerges; apply it to space, and installation comes to complement it, as does, to allege my example here, the traveling or tracking shot.

Bergson's vision of duration and its role in the creative force of life is also a kind of materialism that helps us understand migratory aesthetics through Buñuel, and vice versa. The bond between matter and time is a logical consequence of the ongoing effort of people to become (social) "details" rather than remaining "fragments." Comfort in the face of threatening fragmentation is only possible when it is anchored in facing time, not escaping from it by hiding your head in the sand. Comfort becomes possible when fragmentary existence is the starting point, not a gruesome truth to be repressed. For matter also matters because it is never *only* itself. We invent other things for which matter can be a home: forms, sense experiences, souls, minds, sociality, life. And, importantly, space. Matter is always matter-plus. Thus, fragments of matter are also, always, capable of acts we tend to reserve for humans: yearning for what is lost, hope for what is possible. They perform such acts by means of the porosity of their limits, their openness to contact, extension, and mutuality.

In this sense, Ahtila's reticence to turn her art into political pamphlets can also sensitize us to the way Buñuel remains a source of inspiration for today's "political art." I see this relevance most starkly in his "migratory aesthetics."

With the term "aesthetics" I understand what Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, in his 1750 book *Aesthetica* that was an inspiration for Kant, called it, namely a binding through the senses (which for him had political impact); hence, the double opposite of Kantian disinterestedness, at least in its frequently misunderstood, vulgarized version. Aesthetics in this sense makes something happen on the level of affect, the body, and the senses. With "migratory" I refer not to the culture of migrants but to the culture we all share with migrants, and which has an aesthetic dimension. It is important to realize, then, that no one is outside of migratory culture.[8]

Let me give just one example to clarify the meaning of this concept; a bit literal, perhaps, but this is in line with the way Buñuel makes the domestic animal "literally" too domestic. In the film and video installation *GLUB (Hearts)* from 2004 I took the presence, in the formerly neat and tidy streets of Berlin, of the shells of sunflower seeds as a starting point for an examination of the way the urban spaces had changed for the better, due to the habit of eating seeds in public space. At first sight a source for "dirtying" the urban space, and therefore potentially negatively perceived, this habit entails ineluctable sensations of taste, smell, hearing, vision (the "dirt" of the shells), and tactile sensations, when the shells crack under one's feet. This appeal to the senses makes the phenomenon "aesthetic." It was, in fact, in making this documentary that I first thought of this phenomenon as "migratory aesthetics."

German youngsters eagerly mimicked this new tradition, and it enticed Berliners – old and young, old residents in imitation of new arrivals – to reverse the politically problematic compulsion to "adaptation." Here, the force of innovation came from the immigrants, not the older residents who dictated how to behave. Thus it contributed to the full-fledged, sensuous (aesthetic) internationalization of the formerly repressed and stuffy city into a thriving cultural center. A sign of underemployment, too much time, and not enough to eat became a "hip" fashion under the impact of migration, and thus transformed the migratory culture in a Western European urban center.[9]

Buñuel's art is an audio-visual one; therefore it is on these two senses that I will focus. But the two devices I find most "migratory" as well as the most centrally cinematic in his work, the discrepancies in sound on the one hand, and visual space-making on the other, are also the most sensuous, bearing on the senses in strongly syn-aesthetic ways. The insufficient spaces, for example, tend to suggest smell. They also pertain to migratory culture in central ways. To cut a long argument short: sound and its potential for discrepancies I see as emblematic for the buzz of multilingualism in the contemporary urban migratory space; and space-making, in view of confinement or the lack of space, as in the living condition of many urban dwellers, as well as in the political rallying cry against open borders, is equally powerful in its potential to solicit ambivalence. But it is not for

these potential symbolic resonances that I privilege them here; rather, it is *qua* self-conscious tools to denaturalize cinema that I foreground them. Both devices, if I may call them so, must serve here as emblems of two topics or issues in my analysis of migratory aesthetics – an aesthetics that binds Buñuel's work to the present, and gives it renewed, contemporary relevance, in ways he may not at all have been aware of.[10]

A final issue is representation, too easily assumed to be central to cinema. Surreal or realist, documentary or fiction, and in important ways challenging those very distinctions, Buñuel made art that is, while being mostly although not exclusively narrative, always rigorously figurative. And nothing seems easier than resorting to figurative art to visually address political causes, and many have done so, sometimes to great effect. One only needs to recall Goya and his horror-impregnated *Los desastres de la guerra* (The Disasters of War, 1810–15) to realize the possibilities. He, too, used grim humor to make political points, and Buñuel knew how to put these to renewed use. In the contemporary world, however, too many images of horror make horror invisible; too frequent depictions of it make us impermeable to empathy with the experience of horror, or other politics-driven affects. Excess "naturalizes" horror and obscures the mechanisms of that process. And, as Adorno famously wrote after World War II, art "after" horror risks turning horror into an acceptable, even pleasurable experience.[11]

Since politics is invariably a discourse turning on specific issues, this makes the brief of art to achieve political impact nearly impossible. Today, Ahtila's work demonstrates the restraint necessary to move us deeply on a political level without ever falling into what Adorno would call propaganda. Her *oeuvre* demonstrates that the political impact of art is not dependent on political statements on issues, but, on the contrary, must stay away from the rhetoric of politics. This is where a brief reflection on the political potential of, specifically, figurative art of the moving image, is called for.

Like Buñuel's, Ahtila's work is lucidly and limpidly figurative. It is why we are drawn into it, and attune to its subliminal messages, or rather, its affective impact. To avoid a one-to-one relationship between figuration and political impact, as well as to detect the second link to Buñuel's work, I call attention to an aspect of her video installations, mentioned above in relation to spatial lack. This art form is not figurative in any simple sense: as soon as it consists of more than one channel, it cannot even be seen in its totality. This is comparable to Buñuel's critical commentary of the illusionism of cinema, even if he performed this critique through single-screen works. He deployed camera shifts and montage not to naturalize cuts and enhance visibility but, on the contrary, to make seeing more difficult. And such hampering devices invariably bring home an important insight.

Consider, for example, his parody, or meta-deployment, of the tracking shot. In *El ángel exterminador*, a film devoted to the confinement in space as a metaphor for the confinement in ideology, he deploys tracking shots, technically the opposite of confinement. But he begins such shots without leaving enough space to

complete them. He did not do this because he was too clumsy to calculate the space needed – a supposition utterly out of place in the case of this director who carefully prepared and calculated all of the (relatively long and few) takes of each film before even beginning to shoot. Instead, it seems more likely that he made such "mistakes" to make the point about confinement in a way that implicates himself, his handiwork, as well as affecting the viewer by means of it. This self-reflexive aspect is, for me, key to migratory aesthetics. For through it, one can indicate participatory engagement, rather than depiction from a distance. It is what transforms representation into an active work with affect.[12]

According to Sandro, confinement and travel are not each other's opposite. Both put "the squeeze on thought," the former by restrictiveness, the latter through displacement and estrangement. This makes sense. Confinement and travel are both forms of dislocation. The brothel, in *Belle de jour* (1967), offers a good example. Rather than liberating Sévérine, it becomes a mirror image of her confining milieu; a metaphor of bourgeois life – and vice versa. Similarly, in Sandro's analysis, the wildly riding bus (*Subida al cielo*), or the divagating tram (*La ilusión viaja en tranvía*) confine characters together just as much as the train compartment in *Cet obscur objet du désir* (That Obscure Object of Desire, 1977), in spite of the very different stylistic and ideological thrusts of the latter compared to the two former films. These situations lock them up in one another's company in an emotional stronghold that would make the Sartre of *Huis clos* ("l'enfer c'est les autres") blush with pride.

Sandro's argument concerns confinement, and his take on these situations is therefore very negative. This allows him to overlook the differences between the films. But if looked at from the perspective of migratory aesthetics, the two older films are instances of such an aesthetic in ways the latter is not – in spite of its insistent internationalism in, for example, the use of Spanish migrant figures in the film. The distinction I am suggesting here is not based on genre, even if that would be a plausible mistake to make. Nor can it be based on casting or location. Instead, it is based on mood; a mood of liberating, enriching innovation within, precisely, the recognizable generic conventions. Hence, it is not because travel is dislocating but because it is innovating that it is thematically central in the two Mexican films. This brief commentary demonstrates that Buñuel's work is as much illuminating of the concept of migratory aesthetics as, conversely, the concept helps us avoid conflating very different films. I will now demonstrate this mutual productivity between the concept and the cinematic *oeuvre* through a few examples.[13]

Sound Out of Place

In *Viridiana* (1961), music, classical-religious and American-pop, has an exceptionally elaborate function. Long stretches – foregrounding the length of takes – are filled with it. The music Viridiana's uncle plays on his house organ is beaten in

length by the gramophone music that accompanies the beggars' banquet from beginning to end, and the visit the heroine makes at the house toward the end is cheered with pop music, intimating the modernization her cousin has brought to the estate. The music is diegetic, emphatically so, a feature that is enhanced by a perfect distinction between louder and softer according to whether it is heard from outside or inside the scene. Although the excessive length of the musical takes as well as their unsubtle, heavily realistic modulation according to diegetic space make this deployment of music a near-parody, there is no particular discrepancy at stake here. In the spatial aspect mentioned above, this film is also a model by contrast, as I will argue below.[14]

Although not keen on the use of music in his films, Buñuel, even when he lost his hearing in old age, was a sound artist as much as a visual artist. Or rather, he constantly kept his audience aware that film is not a solely visual art, but just as importantly a sonic one; that the two senses require each other – and as such invoke the other senses. He thus claimed through his practice that what I have called "visual essentialism" is not what cinema is about. He had made this point in his earliest films, when cinema culture had barely exited its silent era. The endless and emphatically monotonous babble of "passion" in the equally emphatically unerotic love-making of the couple in *L'Âge d'or*, for example, is neither particularly in sync nor out-of-sync; the question of sync is moot because it is just noise. As such, it is opposed, not to perfect sync but to meaningful language. It has no connection with what the two figures appear to be doing. But whenever we see their mouths move, all cinematographic effort goes toward the appearance of out-of-sync.

Clearly, there is an issue at stake here, one that is important for the kind of films Buñuel sought to make. Buñuel, who had lived through the era of silent film and made abundant use of the possibility to invoke it in his first trilogy, was a master of the out-of-synch *effect*. Even if it might also have been related, in this early film, to technical precariousness, Buñuel would put such hazards to emphatic use rather than attempt to hide it. And with the word "effect" I am suggesting that this is not a discourse but a sensuous manner of intimating effects in the viewer's body; in other words, "affect." *Affect* is intensity without particularizing expression, enabling the viewer to experience the affect on her own terms. Only then can affect be relational, the experience of art be subjective, and art itself be political. For only then can viewers be simultaneously affected and left free to exert their own agency.[15]

And a master of the out-of-sync effect is also, today, the Finnish artist. And in her work, this cannot be mistaken for a technical commentary on the talkies, nor a discourse that seeks to make points. Thus, her work serves to correct our take on Buñuel's early films, otherwise at risk of being too strongly bound to the history of the medium. On the one hand we see, at some point in *The House*, only a gigantic face that is facing us, on a scale that defeats any conformity to human dimensions, and we hear the face speak very clearly and in perfect lip sync. On the other hand, at the same moment we hear sounds of which we do not see the sources, sources that cannot be contiguous with the primary setting, such as

the sounds of a busy train station in New York City, or a large steam ship arriving in a harbor, while the woman lives in a wooden house in a Finnish forest. This alerts us to the possibility of seeing sound discrepancies as signs, not of the history of the medium but of its cultural politics.

These sounds undermine the deictic assumptions that the installation situation – but also cinema in general – encourages. In the extreme close-up where on-screen space is cropped accordingly, scale is out of proportion, and when the close-up is frontal, there is really no other room for off-screen space than the space of the viewer. The sounds that represent the off-screen space that can be anywhere thus absorb the viewer into the work, luring her closer. Since the sounds come from behind us, they become a fourth wall; enfolding the spectator into the space.[16]

In cinema, that "fourth wall" derived from theatre theory takes the form of coherent diegetic space. The perfectly realistic lowering and heightening of the music during the beggars' banquet in *Viridiana* confirms that spatial coherence. The medium affords a lot of leverage to use sound for other purposes as well. But, as with the domestic animals, I wish to suspend a thematic, along with a medium-historical reading of Buñuel's discrepant sounds. In addition to parodying silent film, he is known to have used, for example, the sound of bells to signal the desire of female protagonists, and one may wish to question the association this enforces, through the usual location of bells in churches, between desire and marriage.[17]

He also made the murmur of salon conversation a bit too loud, vague, and out of place to suggest an analogy between human and animal herd life. In *Viridiana*, the beggars' speeches rival the loud classical music, become hard to understand, and, when she is being raped by one of them, Viridiana's cries are barely audible. Hence, there, even in this perfectly reasonable deployment of music, discrepancies creep in. The migratory aesthetics may remain unnoticed for the simple thematic reasons that, here, it is not based on nationality but on class. And the noise of an explosion to close an unclosable narrative threatened with an unsustainable happy ending is also quite effective. All these are crucial elements of the symbolic language of cinema where sound is as important as image. But it is not to this symbolic, hence figurative, deployment of sound that I wish to call attention here.[18]

Instead, it is in the affective rather than the symbolic impact of sound that its political potential lies. But to achieve this potential, the sound must be denaturalized, lest it contribute to the creation of illusory, diegetically homogeneous, "pure" space. If anything is affect-based, it is sound; it depends on affect, if only because it has little semiotic power of its own. But sound, by definition, moves; it is nothing but movement. This makes it a worthy companion of the moving image that allegedly defines cinema. On the one hand, sound is always expressive, as it brings together inside and outside. This is what makes sound so particularly important, both in *The House* and, seen through its lens, Buñuel's films. But this expressive dimension cannot be measured, because the expressive dimension "operates in conjunction with a person, a listener, who also brings something to the sound" (Evens, 2002: 173).

This required cooperation of the visitor makes it possible for the sound in *The House* to be more than information on an alleged state of psychosis, unless the mental illness is a generalized one that includes the viewer. This, I am beginning to suggest, is what happens in Buñuel's films. Inevitably, the visitor steps in, because "where sound involves percepts and affects, where it presents a world, a world one could be in, there only a person can go" (Evens, 2002: 173). The sounds are producers of the irresistible compulsion to *enter* – even if the space in which one is thus invited to enter is confining, too small, or endlessly and frighteningly large. Think of what the compulsion to enter the barn-like domestic space in *Los olvidados*, adding your unwanted body to the already over-full single space, would do to your sense of voyeurism, or, conversely, if you are sensitive to the mix of human and animal, to your sense of your humanity, in relation to that of the figures; or try to run along in the rubble-like, rocky mountains at the beginning of *L'Âge d'or*. There would simply not be enough room for you. The sound both invites you in and tells you this space is not real, and neither is it yours to enter. Yet, this entering cannot be avoided either.

Buñuel also made this discrepancy a source of migratory aesthetics in the use of the human voice, when he (mis)matched Michel Piccoli's voice with Fernando Rey's by then very recognizable image in his last, French film, *Cet obscur objet du désir*. Recognizability, I argue, is as much a tool for the challenge to national identity as the striking, innovative deployment of mismatched sound. The reason why I bring Ahtila's work in is to suggest that Buñuel's groundbreaking cinema is an enduring source for innovative moving-image art today, and for the way this art can assist us in thinking differently about the migratory culture we live in, willy-nilly, and, I contend, to our greater aesthetic and, hence, political benefit. But, importantly, for such a migratory aesthetics to resort to political effect it needs to combine innovation with recognizability. Sound can only be experienced as out of place if we know, through habit, where its "right" place would be.[19]

Real, Right, True

Whatever the forms it takes, whatever the discourse surrounding it, or within which it intervenes, art can have a social impact that answers to the political. But this impact is not bound to realism, documentary, or other well-worn categorical features. Whether or not Buñuel researched the situation of abandoned street children in Mexico City first-hand, the film is so replete with symbolically charged moments that its fictionality flies in the face of the documentary claim. Here, I am more interested in the insistence with which the claim is made than in its "truth." Even the (for me) obvious fact that, politically, this indictment of the neglect of children is "right" is not the point.

Realism resides more in the taking-for-granted of ideological normalcy than in representational truth or political rightness. It seems significant to me that I have not seen any mention of the racism embedded in the fact that all characters call the indigenous, lightly slanted-eyed child, whose father never showed up to fetch him as promised, "Ojitos" (small eyes). Especially in the film's beginning, this is done with some instance, including by the blind man, and the children even ask how the boy comes to have "such small eyes." The indistinct use of first names (Pedro) and street names (El Jaïbo) does not quite erase this troublesome nomination. But clearly, if the critical silence is any indication, we find it "normal" enough to focus on racial features to assign street names.

The many visual references to Christological iconography, often, in turn, made ambiguous through double allusions, make a documentary interpretation decidedly out of place, rather than "normal" in a documentary way. One example is Pedro's dream about his Mary-like mother. This figure can be seen as standing at an ambivalent point between Marianismo (associated in Mexico with the Virgin of Guadalupe) and La Malinche (La chingada), Hernán Cortés' Aztec lover who betrayed her people. These images are conventionally inserted into Mexican patriarchal ideologies of gender and race, which, in Buñuel's hands, makes for a third semantic network, itself inverted through irony in his relentless critique of such ideologies. Another example would be the dying scene of El Jaïbo, marked by a wound in the middle of his front, whereas he was shot in the back and his face is traversed by shadows suggestive of a cross. These examples – and there are many more, such as the black rooster at the stoning of the blind man – make documentary a barely adequate reading mode. Yet, it seems critics feel compelled to comment on this documentary character.

At stake here is, quite simply, the truth claim of the film. Many scholars of Buñuel's cinematic *oeuvre* have made connections between the documentary *Las Hurdes*, aka *Tierra sin Pan* (Land without Bread, 1932) and the fiction film *Los olvidados*. The former made in Spain before the Civil War (1936–1939), the latter in Mexico after the war (1950), the tendency to pull the two films together seems irresistible. This is understandable. In addition to the subject matter and the political passion motivating the two films, they both challenge the divide between documentary and fiction through iconographic and sonic moments of confusion. Aesthetically – that is, according to representational aesthetics – these films share an attempt to represent with dignity people hard pressed by circumstance to have any dignity of their own. This statement must immediately be qualified through Buñuel's well-known ambivalence toward the subaltern as well as his own upper class, denying both the possibility of redemption. Nevertheless, the films walk the extremely fine line between the idealization of the picturesque aesthetic with the demeaning silencing this entails, and the shocking harsh realism that would make people either turn away from a sight too painful, or normalize it, in line with Adorno's caution. Buñuel's two films, so irresistibly brought together in criticism, could benefit contemporary discussions about affect, empathy, and the wariness of vicarious suffering.[20]

Yet, this obsessive twinning of the films also, it seems to me, hides a slightly more problematic aspect, as if critics feel the need, out of respect for the serious, real subject matter, to justify the film *qua* realism. To mention just one obvious counter-argument, the fiction film is not innocent of erotically enticing moments. Although the scene is readily mentioned and its eroticism remarked upon, the moment when Meche rubs fresh milk into the skin of her legs after being told by the womanizing Jaïbo that this enhances her beauty by the glow it generates, is also an instance of the use of close-up suggestive of sexuality to justify the later assault. Close-up, in other words, is neither an innocent tool nor a foolproof suggestion of confined space, even if, in the scene with Meche, this might be pretexted.[21]

In fact, close-up in Buñuel is readily used for erotic enhancement. I contend that, especially in *Viridiana*, the director deploys the erotic appeal of the close-up as "affection image" (Deleuze) neither to compel an erotic reading nor to make such scenes plausible, but to confront the viewers with their own choice of reading posture. Cinematically, the close-up takes the blown-up detail, frequently a face, out of the rush of diegetic time; it momentarily suspends the fictional temporality of the diegesis and inflects this temporality with the slow-down that is congenial to the large scale. The political potential of the close-up is this. Diegetic temporality, like that of everyday life, inexorably moves from beginning to end and suggests an "after the fiction" that is beyond it. The close-up counters this: it brings the figure on the screen into the orbit of the viewer while temporarily slowing down diegetic time. The close-up creates an "affection-image." This Deleuzian term refers to a category of movement-images of which the close-up is the most typical because, in addition to distorting scale, it suspends time. In consequence, such images stimulate an engagement between viewer and image. This engagement works through affect. It replaces linearity by a vis-à-vis that engages strongly enough to replace the desire for the ending by the desire to stay.[22]

In *Viridiana*, the cord jumping of the child Rita, repeated literally from beginning to end, is equally framed to enhance erotic associations, even if any misbehavior toward her on the part of Don Jaime is never really clear, but (too) readily assumed by critics. This is an instance of the close-up as a tool for spectator's engagement, but not with the poverty and violence, nor with the eroticism as such, but *with their own possible collusion in either*. When the young novice is slowly undressing and her thighs are filmed up close, Don Jaime is playing and enjoying classical music. Never, in this scene, is there is image of Don Jaime looking at Viridiana. The alternation may suggest, but does not represent, a possible voyeuristic spying. And the difference is what implicates the viewer in dialogue with the maker – according to the logic of migratory aesthetics. Similarly, the attempt on Don Jaime's part to take possession of the unconscious young woman – readily called "rape" and, in fact, a case of drug-induced "date rape" – does not go further – graphically speaking at least – than the unbuttoning of her chemise and his laying his head on her breast. Not, I contend, because Buñuel is too prudish, nor inclined to make the old man seem innocent, but because he wishes to leave it to the viewer

to make inferences and take responsibility for them. This is consistent with his elliptic storytelling more generally.[23]

These few examples begin to suggest that close-up is one of the tools of choice for Buñuel to sign his work in a way that is connected to the incomplete tracking shots – not that there is anything experimental or innovative about their use, but, on the contrary, because it is so recognizable. Thus, they become easily normalized, so that on the basis of the normal, the affect of its interruption has free rein. Rarely is the close-up used to individualize a character. But the spatial confinement always accompanies it, whether as a metaphor for the confinement in the bourgeois milieu or in the poverty of the houses of the poor, or as the moral confinement of people flung together, or to isolate the erotically put-upon women. It is in connection with this use of close-up that the incomplete tracking shot becomes most prominent as a cinematic metaphor of migratory aesthetics. The question of the truth of documentary or the realist versus surrealist aesthetics becomes moot in comparison.

Transnationalism versus Migratory Aesthetics

It is these kinds of ambiguities that alert us to the use of cinematic devices, not for the sake of representation but for its complement or even near-opposite, affect – in particular, the affect of migratory aesthetics. From this perspective, the beggars' banquet is again an excellent example to show both Buñuel's traditional deployment of cinematic devices and his skillful turning around of them for the creation of migratory aesthetics. This is the more instructive as this scene, as indeed the film as a whole, is not particularly international, nor experimental in formal or stylistic features.

Most of the scene consists of alternating and narrativizing close-ups. We travel from face to face, even if when we hear people speak, the voices are not easy to localize in the faces. The music, which I mentioned above as exceptionally "normal" in this film, arouses a suspicion about the contrast it facilitates. Deployed to create homogeneous space, with its clear divide between inside and outside, the music is also a veil thrown over the strange discrepancies inside. This is an effective way to construct collective characters, even if the collective is far from homogeneous. The collectivity of characters is an indication for migratory aesthetics, where character figuration is essentially social.

At some point during the meal, the camera is briefly placed higher, intimating that there is a lack of space to shoot from enough horizontal distance to capture the whole. This shot is brief, as if the attempt is tried out, then rejected; as if, that is, hinting at the artist's handiwork, hence participation in the scene. It also intimates the desire to capture the group as a whole; and conversely, the difficulty in doing so might indicate the resistance of the figures to be fragments, their desire

to remain aloof from appropriation in the group. Then the camera goes back to close-up, and the scene remains restless, with the image sometimes moving to suggest hand-held camerawork. But importantly, the only moment when the entire table fits the frame is in a still image.

When read realistically, this image is a photo taken by one of the participants who inexplicably not only disposes of, but also knows how to handle, a photo camera. Surrealistically, the photo is taken by the sex of Enedina – a character (too?) readily seen to stand for a sex-obsessed subject. For me, it is the undecidability between these two readings – or rather, the possibility of both – that is the point. The resulting image, again inserted only very briefly, is known to be a clear iconographic reference to Leonardo da Vinci's *The Last Supper*. This is an image frequently invoked, parodied, and challenged in contemporary art, from Andy Warhol's critique of the unique art object to Israeli artist Adi Nes's 1999 *Untitled* large-format photograph, containing a critique of militaristic Israeli culture. In Buñuel's film, the reference is very detailed, including the slightly right-leaning figure next to "Christ" who, in the painting, is a bit feminine due to his curly, long hair and beardless face. Here, it is a "real" man. The photograph shows signs of camera movement, and is blurred in places. In the case of the beggars' banquet, one may wonder what the meaning of, specifically, this reference is. Is it primarily a dignification of the beggars through their insertion into the tradition of "high art," or conversely, a parody of Christian iconography and its meanings through its use by the misbehaving beggars? Whatever its precise meaning, the image is clearly a gearshift, and this in many different ways (Figure 4.3).[24]



Figure 4.3 The evocation of da Vinci's *The Last Supper* in *Viridiana*. Unión Industrial Cinematográfica, Gustavo Alatriste and Films 59.

It sits as a still image in a work of the moving image. This difference is enhanced by the angle; from oblong to facing, in imitation of the Leonardo. It inserts the tradition of the highest of canonical art into a messy scene. It fixates – literally – the out-of-placeness of the rags-clad, supposedly dirty beggars sitting at the fancy dinner table with the (much appreciated with impressive connoisseurship) fine tablecloth and china. And it mimics the handiwork of the director, not quite hidden behind the scene. Apart from the fact that da Vinci's painting belongs to Italian art, there is no particularly transnational issue at stake in this moment. This is why it seems an excellent opportunity to make a case for a kind of migratory aesthetics that includes none of Buñuel's known challenges to nationalism.[25]

This brings me back to the question of *Los olvidados* in relation to *Las Hurdes*. So far, I have alleged the connection between these two films to challenge the documentary–fiction divide, glossing the idea that the Mexican film is more realist than the surreal films. I also consider it not an example of migratory aesthetics, at least not in its thematic. The Spanish film is only 29 minutes long and both an indictment of poverty and the product of a rather dead-pan narratorial voice that keeps affect at bay. All these features suggest documentary. But the film hardly passes as a documentary, especially not the ethnographic one it parades as being.

According to Jeffrey Ruoff's fabulously detailed and preciously "preposterous" analysis of the latter, this film is not at all a documentary but a surrealist parody of the – then incipient – genre. Significantly, among the features he alleged he includes the sound discrepancies, thus hinting at what I have called, with the help of Ahtila's *The House*, the schizophrenia of the medium (Bal, 2011b: 52). I believe him, although I prefer to accept both labels. With Buñuel, parody implicates what is parodied; according to the implication of the maker as one of the features of migratory aesthetics, it forbids the pursuit of clean hands.[26]

If *Las Hurdes* works in ways similar to *Los olvidados*, this is not primarily because of our own need to be emotionally correct toward the poor, to feel bad about famine and the abandonment of children, or to decide to transform our political indifference because we are persuaded by the depiction of the gruesome consequences of economic inequality. Neither film, moreover, is an example of Buñuel's transnational imagination, any more than the beggars' banquet scene is. Clearly, these are three instances of something else, which I call migratory aesthetics. This aesthetic, then, does not require, or even specialize in, transnationalism. It may peacefully coexist with such an aesthetic, as indeed it does in many Buñuel films. The social merger in which migratory aesthetics is anchored is, in all these three cases, based – to use a somewhat obsolete term we can yet not afford to lose – on class, not nationality.

The well-bred and well-fed Luis Buñuel was just as shocked when he first went to the poverty-stricken region of *Las Hurdes* in his native country Spain as when, upon establishing himself in Mexico, he was when he entered the ghetto of the abandoned street children. One needs not travel to other countries to witness

horror, is what the juxtaposition of the two films intimates. That shock, not the ethnographic gaze or documentary project, informs both films. From that shock comes the impulse to *enter*. From entering comes the impulse to engage, participate, and soil one's hands. I can imagine that the strangely unpunished behavior of the beggars in *Viridiana* and the discrepant use of voice as well as Viridiana's rather subdued screams and Jorge the new owner's lack of response, are less the product of a wild fantasy than an instance of a migratory aesthetic: the exhilarating albeit frightening realization that wherever we are and whatever we witness, we are always already implicated in that scene. There, not primarily in the transnationalism, lies Buñuel's migratory aesthetics.

Notes

1 For the concept of preposterous history, see Bal (1999). There I consider a "new" Caravaggio that emerges "after" contemporary art.
2 Ahtila's *The House* is her most successful work to date. It premiered at the XIe Documenta in Kassel (2002) and has been widely exhibited since.
3 On this point, see also Acevedo-Muñoz (2003).
4 The collective volume *Buñuel: el imaginaro transcultural*, edited by Gastón Lillo (2003), is entirely devoted to Buñuel's transnationalism.
5 Here, I must keep this argument about the political force of art exceedingly succinct. See Bal (2010) for an extended version of this argument.
6 I paraphrase a statement by French philosopher and art historian Hubert Damisch in my documentary on the value of anachronism, *Hubert Damisch: Thinking Aloud* (Bal, 2011). Damisch speaks of "looking at the art of the past through eyes awakened by modern art." I have developed this retrospective logic in Bal (1999) mentioned in note 1.
7 Sandro (2003). The scope of this essay forbids an explanation of the differences between "haptic" and "tactile." In order to avoid "term dropping," I restrict myself here to tactility. On cinema as a time-based art, see Mulvey (2006). On time as a key issue in migratory aesthetics, see Bal (2008).
8 Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1970 [1750]). I leave this provisional definition of the aesthetic purposely too open, in order to avoid confining it to "fine art." Although many people have taken up the term "migratory" since I first introduced it, it is seldom used in the precise sense I am proposing here. The precision is important, though, to avoid an appropriation of the experience of migrants without in-depth knowledge of it.
9 For more on this and my other video projects, see www.miekebal.org/artworks/films . For a recent formulation of "migratory aesthetics" with the example of *GLUB (Hearts*), see Bal (2011).
10 Sound is a primary issue in my video installation *Nothing Is Missing*. If I willfully ignore the cinema-historical importance of Buñuel here, and equally willfully commit anachronism, this should not be taken as a statement on the relative importance of anachronistic ("preposterous") versus historical work. I simply aim to contribute a perspective, not to replace one.

11 "Cultural criticism finds itself faced with the final stage of the dialectic of culture and barbarism. *To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric*. And this corrodes even the knowledge of why it has become impossible to write poetry today" (Adorno, 2003: 162, emphasis added). In connection to my view of political art it is worth revisiting Adorno's position: "… the task of criticism must be not so much to search for the particular interest groups to which cultural phenomena are to be assigned, as to decipher the general social tendencies that are expressed in these phenomena and through which the most powerful interests realize themselves" (2003: 158).

12 Joan Mellen interprets this as a tool for self-reflection, intimating even a kind of narcissism, when she writes: "Such overt intrusions of style announce the real hero of Buñuel's films, his the only consciousness we can respect" (1978: 23). I have learned from Pepita Hesselberth to consider the willful deployment of "hand-heldness" as a critical tool. See her very lucid, concise study of cinema through contemporary installations (2012).

13 I am suggesting here very briefly what I have argued at length in my book (Bal: 2002), which is the need to work with concepts but not by fixating them to a well-rehearsed meaning, using them as a tool. Rather, they should be interlocutors, constantly changing under the impact of the art works with which they are brought into dialogue.

14 The beggars' banquet is accompanied by Handel's *Messiah*. To call this choice simply ironic – which it also is – would risk eliminating the ambiguity of the scene.

15 On this (Deleuzian) conception of affect, see Ernst van Alphen (2008). For a rather polemical account of the tendency to overcompensate the former domination of a text bias by essentializing vision, see my article (Bal, 2003a). This article solicited passionate responses, to which I replied in (Bal, 2003b).

16 On Ahtila's use of discrepant sound, see my article "Losing It: Politics of the Other (Medium)" (2011b). As for Buñuel, according to Marsha Kinder, he mastered "the conventions of film sound, to subvert them more effectively" (1993: 294). For an excellent article theorizing sound in general, see Aden Evens (2002).

17 This use of bells in Buñuel has inspired Michelle Williams Gamaker and me to use bell sounds gone awry to indicate the incipient transition between Folly and Madness, in our feature film *A Long History of Madness*, 2011 (see www.crazymothermovie.com).

18 A classic study on sound in cinema is by Michel Chion (1994). See also his later book (2009).

19 I suspend here the distinctions between cinema and video art, focusing on the audio-visual moving image in general. The distinctions are important in other respects; see, for an excellent survey, David R. Rodowick (2007). Like other thinking historians and knowledgeable thinkers (including in the empirical sense), he offers much that I take to heart about this issue, in particular the "ethics of time" he elaborates (2007: 73).

20 For example, three articles in the volume edited by Gastón Lillo (2003) establish a connection between the two films (Cros, Tuñón, Vargas). Quite a few others mention it in passing. On the difficult political-aesthetic problem of the representation of suffering, see Jill Bennett (2005). See, among her many publications on this film, Ibarz (2003).

21 On the close-up and the ideologies surrounding it, see Mary Ann Doane (2003).

22 The most succinct formulation of these three types of "movement-images" is in Deleuze (1986).

23 I suggest that the use of the word *"inequívocamente"* in the article by Alejandro Yarza y Gastón Lillo demonstrates the director's success in luring viewers and critics into an attitude that the film does not impose, but the possibility of which it just hints at. The author's notion that the servant Ramona is Don Jaime's delegate in spying on Viridiana constitutes a further disempowerment of the women in the film (2003: 154).

24 The characterization of Enedina as a sex-obsessed subject can be found in Fiddian and Evans (1988: 67) and is endorsed by Yarza and Lillo (2003: 149). For a brilliant analysis of Leonardo's painting, see Leo Steinberg (1973). On the relationship between Nes's acclaimed photograph and Leonardo's painting as a strategy for a cultural critique on Israeli militarism, see Noa Roei (2012).

25 There is, as usual, also a surrealist aspect to this. A desacralizing recycling of canonical paintings was not uncommon in surrealist circles, and Duchamp's 1919 parody of *Mona Lisa* in his *LHOOQ* put Leonardo in the limelight for such uses.

26 Jeffrey Ruoff (1998). For the idea that film genres are parodied as soon as they emerge, see Nanna Verhoeff (2006), who makes this claim for the Western.

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Part Two

A Golden Age

5

Surreal Souls

Un chien andalou and Early French Film Theory

Sarah Cooper

The surrealist concern with dreams and the unconscious is nowhere more richly and concisely explored in filmic form than in Luis Buñuel's and Salvador Dalí's celebrated *Un chien andalou* (An Andalusian Dog, 1929). This short has received a wealth of sophisticated critical attention from its initial release through to the present day, with the opening sequence in particular inspiring pages of commentary in its own right. The associative resonance of the arresting beginning – in which Buñuel slices open the left eye of the female protagonist whose look to camera engages our own directly in the visual assault that follows an image of a wisp of cloud that cuts across the moon – functions through a graphic match according to the kind of symbolic logic that only dreams can support. Freud famously proffered dreams as the royal road to knowledge of the activities of the unconscious mind (see Freud, 1991 [1899]), and Buñuel himself led film critics and theorists to psychoanalysis, suggesting that it alone could provide the method to investigate the symbols of the film (in Stauffacher, 1947: 29–30). In so doing, Buñuel also pointed inadvertently and indirectly to a term prevalent in Freud's writings and in early attempts in French film theory to conceptualize the specificity of cinema as an art form. For Freud, the road to the unconscious was one that led to the soul, yet not in a mystical sense, and not as a passageway to immortality. Rather, this indistinct term designated the richness of inner life in secular contexts at the beginning of the twentieth century, but has disappeared with the passage of time, both in more recent film theory and in translations of the Freudian text, especially in the Anglophone world.

Positing the goal of psychoanalysis as one that seeks to integrate the emotional life and the intellectual life, Bruno Bettelheim notes how numerous, crucial passages in James Strachey's English translation of Freud's work, the *Standard Edition of the*

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Complete Psychological Works, render the German term for the soul – "die Seele" – as "mind" or "intellect." Bettelheim states: "This is particularly misleading because we often view our intellectual life as set apart from – and even opposed to – our emotional life, the life of our fantasies and dreams" (Bettelheim, 1985: 71). As a result of such a rendering, Bettelheim laments how readers of this English translation do not get an understanding of the soul whose nebulous regions Freud was charting. Bettelheim's emphasis on Freud's psychoanalytic introspection, rather than on outward observation, permits him to differentiate between Freud's approach and psychological research and teaching that are behaviorally, cognitively, or physiologically directed. He writes: "Freud believed that the study and understanding of our dreams would open to our comprehension the previously unrecognized enormous inner space of the soul" (Bettelheim, 1985: 68). The soul conjoins the life of body and mind, as alternate inner spaces merge with one another.

Early French film theory, especially the first avant-garde of Impressionism, abounds with mention of the soul. Its sense in Freud's work dovetails with the inner life the early theorists claimed film revealed. While the term is far less abundant in the second wave of the avant-garde that is aligned with Surrealism, the French surrealist film theorists were still broadly in tune with the soul as an all-encompassing term of reference for thinking and feeling, as was Buñuel himself who did not just focus on the surrealist breach of rationality in mental terms alone. It is the broad terrain of the soul that I seek to trace in this chapter, first in theoretical writings of the period, and then in a reading of Buñuel and Dalí's *Un chien andalou*. There is, however, a nuance that emerges in the transition from Impressionist to surrealist theory, and this, coupled with Buñuel's own sense of the soul, suggests that it does not just pertain to the possibilities of capturing the inner life when mobilized in the context of film. Indeed, seemingly in tacit agreement with Béla Balázs's observations in *Der sichtbare Mensch*, then rather than taking us only into the image and into psychological depth, the soul – thinking and feeling – resides on the surface of the film. In spite of apparently promoting the logic of a surface/depth dualism when speaking of the outward bodily expression of the soul, Béla Balázs defines film as an art of the surface in which the inner is the outer. Differentiating film from painting, Balázs argues that movement and organic continuity serve the surface appearance of psychology and signification (see Balázs, 2010 [1924]: 41). In *Un chien andalou* this surface becomes an important locus of intellect and emotion, and of a generative reading of processes that extend beyond a Freudian approach to psychic life to look outward as well as inward, to breach subjectivity and open it up through the very in-depth activity of probing its inner processes.

The Soul in the 1920s Avant-Garde in France

Un chien andalou emerged at the end of a decade that burgeoned with avant-garde activity, from the late 1910s onward. By 1918, Hollywood was beginning to dwarf the French film industry to the extent that the latter could not compete with its

transatlantic counterpart. French filmmakers made a virtue of this inequity by creating a vibrant alternative film culture, with different modes of production, exhibition, and distribution. Film journals, literary reviews, and newspapers became the sites for debates about film's current and future possibilities. This era also saw the emergence of film societies, *ciné-clubs*, which provided venues for theoretical discussion. The best known of these was the *Club des amis du septième art* (CASA) (Club of the friends of the seventh art), founded by the Italian expatriate Ricciotto Canudo, who was key to celebrating film as an art form at that time. Equally importantly, filmmaker and theorist Louis Delluc was responsible for initiating the public film *conférence* or lecture with film screening and discussion. An intellectual film culture was established through these intersecting circuits of screenings, publications, and debate. Major French production companies – Gaumont and Pathé – backed a number of Impressionist films, but the success of the movement depended on the formation of independent companies. The gradual folding of these independent companies is associated with the decline of the first avant-garde of Impressionism, but a second movement was already underway, one that had a more politicized and clearly revolutionary agenda from the outset.

The surrealist movement in French cinema ran from 1927 to 1930 and generated only a handful of films. Although there has been much debate about which films can be included within the surrealist canon, the inaugural film is now generally accepted to be Germaine Dulac's *La Coquille et le clergyman* (The Seashell and the Clergyman) of 1927.[1] Dulac's dual status as Impressionist and surrealist aside, the filmmakers and theorists of the two avant-gardes were otherwise distinct. J. Dudley Andrew marks out one difference through their contrasting reactions to the popular films and serials of Louis Feuillade: the Surrealists loved what the Impressionist critics considered lowbrow (see Andrew, 1995: 27). Indeed, the favored films of the Surrealists were not those of their French Impressionist contemporaries, whom they openly mocked, but rather, those of Feuillade, Buster Keaton, and Charlie Chaplin, which appealed to the masses rather than an artistic elite (see, for example, Desnos 1927 in Abel, 1988: 399). As we shall observe in more detail, the shift into Surrealism involved the revelation of the unconscious in a different way from the Impressionist focus on externalizing the psychical processes of its individual characters. The Surrealists seek in their films not merely to represent thought processes but to enact them and to encourage reciprocally in their audiences active engagement with the film – to experience rather than just view the processes laid bare. The slit eye at the outset of *Un chien andalou* suggests that a comprehensive response to this film will be prompted by senses beyond sight per se, and it is on the blindside of the body that the vision of the soul is first unleashed. Such vision has its first stirrings in the Impressionist era and it is through differentiation from this earlier avant-garde moment that the specificity of the surreal soul gradually comes to light.

Reference to the soul is everywhere within the period of French Impressionist filmmaking.[2] The early French film theorists speak of the soul in the context of

mental activity. As Stuart Liebman observes, these theorists, following their earlier Symbolist counterparts, were interested in profound mental processes of belief (see Liebman, 1983: 13, 22). The French term "esprit" translates into English as both "mind" and "spirit," and just as the latter term occasionally conjures mystical connections to another world, "spirituel" can mean "spiritual" in a religious sense or can be translated more secularly as "mental" or "witty." Likewise "l'âme" designates the soul but when used in phrases such as "état d'âme" it is translated most idiomatically into English as a "state of mind." The close relationship between mental activity and soul asserts itself semantically in this French context, and this is nowhere more apparent than in the Impressionists' theorization of *photogénie*.

Commenting on the non sequiturs of the intertitles of *Un chien andalou*, J. Dudley Andrew argues that they recall, in playful, childish terms, the narrative drive that propels Feuillade's films, which he claims the Impressionists, who were inspired by the atmosphere of his films, if not their characters, distorted with the supposedly higher aims of *photogénie* in mind (Andrew, 1995: 28). Popularized by Louis Delluc in 1918, the concept of *photogénie* was fundamental to theorists and practitioners of French Impressionist filmmaking. In the early 1920s, they were interested in exploring what cinema could do specifically, and they articulated its uniqueness in theory through this concept. Difficult to define because it depends essentially upon non-verbal cinematic articulation, *photogénie* was linked to the cinematic transformation of photography through movement and time to capture subjective, interior movements of those people and things represented on screen. Perception is defamiliarized so that we see ordinary things in a new light, and the immaterial realm is made visible as images circumvent language to speak directly to experience. There is something limiting about this focus on *photogénie* and, as Ian Christie has pointed out, it does lead to a privileging of a single type of "cinematic sign" based on an image (Christie, 1979: 41). The close-up is its preferred technical figure and while each theorist/filmmaker is interested in talking through what occurs on screen by attending to the close-up, there is always also a drive toward what is not shown – the invisible, the intangible, the *insaissisable* – through what is. For Jean Epstein, writing in *Bonjour cinéma* in 1921: "The close-up is the soul of cinema" [*l'âme du cinéma*] (Epstein, 1921: 94). In this context, his choice of vocabulary is far from innocent or arbitrary. His early writing in *Bonjour cinéma* sets up, between screen and spectator, what Richard Abel terms "a mysterious relay of energy" akin to breathing or taking a sacrament (Abel, 1988: 205). In tune with this mystery, *photogénie* was understood to present viewers with the soul of the person or object viewed. Even when theorizing extended beyond a concern with the film shot to consider the conjoining of images to produce the rhythmical structure of cinematographic writing – *cinégraphie* – this was intended to preserve, rather than diminish, the photogenic qualities of the individual image. The mysterious and, indeed, mystical elements of the photogenic pervade Impressionist film theory from the outset and also account for some of the films that the theorists valorized in their work.

For Canudo, writing in "Reflections on the Seventh Art" in 1923, one of the duties of the new medium of film, in his view, was to approach an immaterial sphere, and the soul is broached through the immateriality of the unconscious. He states: "One of cinema's exclusive domains will be the immaterial, or more precisely, the *unconscious*" (Canudo 1923 in Abel, 1988: 300). He draws his first filmic example from the work of the Swedish director Victor Sjöström, who was ardently admired by both Canudo and Delluc (see Delluc 1919 in Abel, 1988: 188–189).[3] Speaking of Sjöström's *Körkarlen* (The Phantom Carriage, 1921) – one of the Swedish director's last Scandinavian films before he left for Hollywood in 1923 – Canudo locates the aforementioned concern with the immaterial and the unconscious in explorations of memory and thought. He also discusses the technical means used to create in the visual register the workings of the mind that usually remain invisible to the eye. In Sjöström's film, the last man to die on New Year's Eve, drunkard David Holm (played by the director), is condemned to travel the earth collecting the souls of the dead in the titular carriage. In the film, the souls of the dead separate from the bodies of the deceased and roam around as superimposed figures in the equally faint image of the carriage. Canudo reads the film as the ravings of a drunkard, since Holm turns out not to have died after all. The superimpositions thus designate an immaterial world tied to the life of the mind, as Holm's drink-induced sleep has caused him only to dream of the haunting existence of his soul in its life after death. Referring more generally to film's capacities, Canudo writes: "like all arts this one paves new avenues for the soul's expression" (Canudo 1923 in Abel, 1988: 300). Thought, memory, and dreams register facets of the inner life whose broader capacity and organizing principle is designated by the soul. While Canudo's discussion of the immaterial dimension to which film grants access is a complex and sometimes confusing synthesis of conscious and unconscious mental activities in life with the life of the soul after death, his associative moves between mental activities and the soul are reflected in other writings of the period, notably those that explore a fusion of dream and the fantastic, thus entering surrealist theoretical territory.

For Paul Ramain indeed, Sjöström's film emblematizes the belief that dream and cinema are different but parallel expressions of the same impulse (Ramain 1925 in Abel, 1988: 362–363). Both the material conditions (silent people; food exuding no odor; tasteless liquids) and the fact that the images that one sees unroll before one's eyes in a darkened hall are comparable to oneiric images, in Ramain's view. The dynamic affinity between the movement of cinema and dream and the connection between cinema and music cause him to declare that dream and the fantastic are "nicely externalized by music (Moussorgsky) and even better so by cinema (*Charette fantôme*)" (Ramain 1925 in Abel, 1988: 364). This latter reference to Sjöström's film cements his view that cinema, as translator of dream, may one day become a true optical music. He writes, revealing the parity already observed between thought and impressionist images, "*All the expressive and visual processes of the cinema are found in dream*, and have existed there since man first came to exist and

to think. The simultaneity of actions, soft-focus images, dissolves, superimpositions, distortions, the doubling of images, slow motion, movement in silence – are these not *the soul of dream and daydream*?" (Ramain 1925 in Abel, 1988: 363, emphasis in original). While Epstein named the key technical device of the close-up the soul of cinema and this in turn opened up the enigmatic realm of *photogénie*, Ramain takes up a film lionized by the Impressionists and praises capacities that take it into the world of the Surrealists, naming the range of cinema's technical and optical devices the soul of dream and daydream. The connection between cinematic specificity, soul, and dream binds film to psychology, and suggests a smooth transition from Impressionist to surrealist thinking, yet this move is not as straightforward as it would appear, and it is Dulac's theorizing in relation to one of her own films that serves as a point of departure for marking out the surrealist difference that *Un chien andalou* will then serve to emphasize further.

The capaciousness of the soul in the context of French Impressionism is borne out by other theorists who speak of film as having an all-encompassing ability to designate the thoughts, memories, feelings, and emotions of human characters, to animate objects, as well as to probe a spirit world after death. The soul is everywhere and in everything in the world, according to the widest contours of these theories, and as a life force it also survives death, suggesting an eternal existence. When it does link up with thinking, as it does in the work of Dulac, it comes across in coherent terms and intelligibly in relation to the mental thought of an individual. For Dulac the close-up, or psychological shot as she also terms it, lays bare "the very thought of the character projected onto the screen. It is his soul, his desire …" (Dulac 1924 in Abel, 1988: 310). Thought and soul are apparently synonymous in this statement, but the former is more accurately a facet of the latter. The close-ups of Madame Beudet, for example, in Dulac's acclaimed *La Souriante Madame Beudet* (Smiling Madame Beudet) of 1923, are followed by images of her thoughts, and give spatial, material form to the life of the mind, whether dreams, fantasies, recollections, or other mental impressions. Dulac also states that "[s]uperimposition is thinking, the inner life" (Dulac 1924 in Abel, 1988: 311) Correspondingly, Madame Beudet's fantasy male figures that she summons forth to break the monotony of her daily existence are superimposed entities with ghost-like consistency. While what we witness here is the persistence of other people in their absence (her fantasy lover, her reviled husband), the conjuring of those who are materially absent through imagination, fantasy, and memory leads to the immaterial realms of soul, accessed through the mind but not reducible to it. For, when Dulac defines the art of cinema as the inner life made perceptible by images, she includes the possibility of expressing feeling and emotions, as well as thoughts and memories (Dulac 1924 in Abel, 1988: 306, 310). This film thus works through her theories of how movement is connected to thinking and how it can also evoke emotion. Where Dulac's theory moves from the thought to the soul and back again, she signals a belief in the relationship between the two as well as their distinctness, and cinema becomes more than just a thinking machine on this basis.

The connection to the unleashing of the clear thoughts and emotions of a single character within a film contrasts markedly with the surrealist vision of inner life, which is more disjunctive, as *Un chien andalou* registers clearly.

Surrealism and *Un chien andalou*

In two distinct but very useful overviews of the relationship between surrealist film – and Buñuel's work in particular – and the varied theories that have been mobilized to read it, both Phil Powrie and Linda Williams note, among other approaches, the centrality of psychoanalytic and semiotic readings: Powrie singles out early psychosexual readings of the male protagonist of *Un chien andalou* and the displacement of such an approach by semiotic theory, before the rise of Lacanian theorizing in the 1970s, and Williams groups together the semiotic and Lacanian psychoanalytic approaches as formalist (see Powrie, 1998 and Williams, 1996). As acknowledged at the start of this chapter, it was Buñuel who first directed critics to psychoanalysis as the theory that could provide the means to investigate the film's symbols (see Stauffacher, 1947: 29–30). This misdirects us in many ways, since the filmmakers got there before us, and by proposing psychoanalysis so knowingly Buñuel sends critics in a hermeneutic circle, teasing us to find what they are telling us they put there themselves. We are nonetheless asked to read the manifest and latent content – to adopt the Freudian distinction in the interpretation of dreams – and theoretically informed critical responses to the film do precisely this: where formalist readings approach form and figure, symbolic or allegorical readings and psychosexual interpretations do not take anything at face value, looking at the image to look through it and find meaning in what lies beyond the manifest visual content. The soul, in Buñuel's sense, when thinking about film, encourages us to attend to the surface as well as the depths, shifting us away from psychology per se and moving us toward a phenomenological understanding of this pseudo-entity, which clings to the body's contours and ghosts its movements.

Writing in praise of *découpage* in 1928, Buñuel declares how this activity of segmentation precedes all others when working on a film:

> The whole film, even its best details, is contained on sheets of paper: the interpretation, the camera angles, the length of each segment; here a *fondu enchainé* or a superimposed close medium shot or long shot, while the camera remains still, pans, or tracks. The miraculous fluidity of images that spontaneously and uninterruptedly become classified, ordered, and compartmentalized within shots. (Think, feel with images.) … The universe, the infinite and the minuscule, matter and soul, can navigate within the restrictive confines of the screen – the ocean and a droplet – that traces its rectangle in the brain of a filmmaker like a dimension of his soul. (Buñuel, 2002 [1928]: 133–134)

The filmmaker who thinks and feels with images segments in advance of the filming with the shape of the screen in mind that connects with his soul. Echoing the Freudian understanding with which this article began, the soul here does not have mystical connotations, nor is it associated with immortality; it is bound up simply with the activities of thinking and feeling with and through images that the filmmaker does with a view to capturing what he does on film. Thus far, then, we are not radically out of step with the Impressionist sense of contact with the inner life, yet the exteriorizing of the inner world causes us to respond to the surface more intently than has been apparent until now. Buñuel and Dalí take us to the limits of the body, through an expanded relation to the mind, to flesh out the surreal soul. Expanding beyond subjectivity is the first challenge, and it is worth a foray into one of the most sustained early theorizations of Surrealism and cinema in order to show how Buñuel and Dalí's film actually outstrips what theorists were able to conceptualize with regard to the filmic articulation of the thought processes of a human subject.

Jean Goudal writes the following of the essential character of surrealist theses, thus aligning himself with one of the central tenets of André Breton's *Manifesto of Surrealism* (1924), which sought a superior reality in dreams:

> that the unconscious activity of the mind, on which general attention has been focused through the work of thinkers like Freud and Babinski or the novels of authors like Marcel Proust, has become the keystone of mental life. The artist's principal target is henceforth to search for a reality in the dream superior to that which the logical, therefore arbitrary, exercise of thought suggests to us. (Goudal 1925 in Abel, 1988: 354)

Goudal also observes the problems with Surrealism in this regard, however, since as soon as consciousness rummages through the unconscious, then, as he explains, one no longer speaks of the unconscious. He adds that a theory in which a superior reality afforded to the mystical fusion of dream and the real does not explain how the two might communicate with one another. Furthermore, he maintains that since reason "is the part of our mind common to all men" (Goudal 1925 in Abel, 1988: 355), its disappearance could result in a collapse into an individual and incommunicable mode of expression. It is the comparison between one mind and another that is sought here, and Goudal's query is whether this would ever be possible without reason and logic.

These objections apply more readily to the realm of literature, though, and disappear in the cinematic realm, according to Goudal. The unity of conscious and unconscious in cinema is possible: "in which the thing seen corresponds exactly to a *conscious hallucination*" (Goudal 1925 in Abel, 1988: 355). Interestingly, Goudal involves the spectator's body in its entirety in the experience but only to disembody them: "Our body itself submits to a sort of temporary depersonalization which takes away the feeling of its own existence. We are nothing but two eyes riveted to ten square meters

of white sheet" (Goudal 1925 in Abel, 1988: 355). For Goudal, the material conditions of cinema – the darkness of the auditorium space – destroy the real images that would contradict those on screen (Goudal 1925 in Abel, 1988: 356). Music is also credited with warding off impressions that might come to us through our other senses. Arbitrary simplifications analogous to those one finds in dreams are also singled out: the lack of three-dimensionality and the black and white images. The repudiation of logic that also forbids language is not anathema to cinema in a way that it is within the literary dimension. An image of a church and a dazzling bell side by side, for example, sit as two facts that one cannot link logically, which Goudal suggests one experiences as "the almost simultaneous sight of two objects, exactly the cerebral process, that is to say, that suggested this comparison to the author" (Goudal 1925 in Abel, 1988: 358). From one mind to another, then, cinema makes this surreal transition better than literature. On this basis he argues that filmmakers should see what they gain by opening their art to the world of the dream through its three key characteristics: the visual, the illogical, and the pervasive. With regard to observations on the pervasiveness of cinema, he argues that "a film, then, will have a sufficiently pervasive and human character because it will have come from the brain of one of my peers" (Goudal 1925 in Abel, 1988: 359). Although a collective, collaborative effort, the *cinéaste* is perceived to be the figure to supervise the initial idea through to the screen without distortion. With Buñuel's and Dalí's collaboration in particular in mind, the opening out beyond the thought processes of one person in isolation is figured at several points throughout the film. And, more so than Goudal acknowledges, the body of the spectator is implicated in responding to this film every step of the way.

In an early segment of the film, after claiming the striped box from the male protagonist who has fallen from his bike outside the woman's house, there is a dissolve from the street scene to a close-up of the box, which the woman opens indoors and out of which she takes a striped tie. She places it in a collar and lays it on top of clothing set out on the bed, to complete the outfit, before she walks round to sit at the foot of the bed and looks at it. A cut to a shot of the bed shows the clothing arranging itself (the tie ties itself) and then rearranging itself, before it goes back to how it was when she placed it on the bed and took a seat. The film then cuts back to her staring at it before this rearranging occurs again, suggesting that we are seeing this from her point of view. In this sequence, we see her looking intently and determinedly, then we see a change that happens twice without her intervention, suggesting that this is an effect of her mind rather than something that actually happens. Yet the content of her mind is not flagged quite so obviously as it was in Dulac's *La Souriante Madame Beudet* and the woman's expression could belong just as appropriately to someone who is actually witnessing these garments moving of their own accord. Rather than the laying bare of a single consciousness and thought process, as Dulac describes in her theorization of the thinking soul of *La Souriante Madame Beudet*, we encounter nothing quite so linear here. We are inside the thought processes rather than seeing them from the outside, and this turns the inside of the subject out and conjoins it to others.

That we are not merely seeing the contents of someone's mind and thought processes – whether fantasy or hallucination – in isolation is made clear in a subsequent sequence. The man stands staring at his right hand, and the film cuts to a close-up image of a hand with a hole in the center, in and out of which ants are crawling, before showing the man looking at his hand again. As at the outset when the razor slits the woman's eye, the association produced through the film's cuts makes us think that we see something that we do not. Yet in contrast to the clothing that moves on the bed and that could be a function of the woman's thoughts, the woman here goes over to witness what is happening in the man's hand, and there follows a sequence of associations, from armpit hair through a sea urchin, both of which are echoed later in the film in broader associations (the hair that transfers to the man's sealed-up mouth within the apartment at a later stage; the ending of the film at the seaside). The chain of images does not follow in a linear manner, as does Dulac's sense of how thinking progresses within *La Souriante Madame Beudet*. The chain of dissolves that moves from ants in the hand through armpit hair to sea urchin gesture in so many different associative directions based on vision to start with, but expanding outwards also takes us beyond the development of thinking attached to one thinker. The implication is that both man and woman are seeing this in their mind's eye. By rendering that which is intangible tangible, and making it a function of the conscious and unconscious thought processes of more than one person, subjectivity is no longer the anchor point of this film's mechanisms.

On one level, and viewed across the film as a whole, this decentering of subjectivity is obvious since it reinforces the film's collaborative underpinnings. Yet the form of the film contributes to this destabilizing of subjectivity further by challenging the possibilities of viewing straightforwardly by identification. Although, as Kuenzli rightly observes, Surrealism situates itself within cinematic convention and thereby draws in the audience rather than distancing them, as in Dada film (Kuenzli, 1996: 10), the lack of continuity in the treatment of the protagonists here prevents the progressive developmental identificatory bonds that we might have in conventional narrative. A visceral reaction to the slitting of the eye at the start of the film is actually a reaction to the slitting of any eye – which is what the sliced eye is confirmed to be through the woman's untainted appearance in subsequent sequences. Everything opens out beyond the individual subject. The spatiotemporal dislocations of the film, flagged by the wild incongruities of the timeless "Once upon a time" and the precision of subsequent intertitles, as well as the changes of location and identification, are produced at the level of the cut or dissolve. From apartment to beach, from her eye to an eye, the possibilities of the film medium are exploited to the full to see and think in a manner that makes connections, that creates coherence, and that restores continuities. Yet disjunctions are introduced seamlessly, facilitated by the dual encouragement and thwarting of the development of a continuous thought process attached to anyone in particular. The irrational and disruptive mechanisms mean that this kind of thinking cinema is beyond conscious

control and volition, and it thus disrupts the very syntax used to articulate the existence of the unconscious. As the unconscious cuts through language, the soul cuts through film to be felt and experienced, rather than just seen and thought. It is at the limits of the body that the soul takes form. Robert Aron, in an article titled "Films of Revolt," suggests that in France one would search in vain for any films that have merit, beyond those of Man Ray and Luis Buñuel (Aron 1929 in Abel, 1988: 432). It is a deep sense of disorder and an unsettling break to narrative order that is praised here. Aron singles out Buñuel for creating improbable characters that exceed language's competence and for exercising "destructive comedy" on the social conventions of clothing (Aron 1929 in Abel, 1988: 432). All elements are dislocated: "[h]ere it is no longer fresh water, experience, or matter" (Aron 1929 in Abel, 1988: 433). For Aron, "[i]t is on the borders of our body, there where our desires pour forth and where the world assaults us, that Buñuel, squared on his haunches, relying on this inner strength, seeks to bring to bear the vertiginous" (Aron 1929 in Abel, 1988: 433). These bodily borders are tested throughout *Un chien andalou*.

Fetishized (especially the woman's torso) or otherwise truncated (the final Beckettian shot of the male and female protagonists half buried and immobilized in sand) body parts are a key point of focus throughout. The severed hand that the androgyne pokes with a stick reveals layers of bloodied subcutaneous fat and muscle that corresponds, at a distance, with the bleeding wound of the gouged out donkeys' eyes in the shot that sees the male protagonist drag them on top of the grand pianos with bemused members of the clergy attached. The gouged-out eyes, the blood of the severed hand, and the suppurating sliced eye at the start (Figures 5.1 and 5.2) draw attention to the material vulnerability of the body,

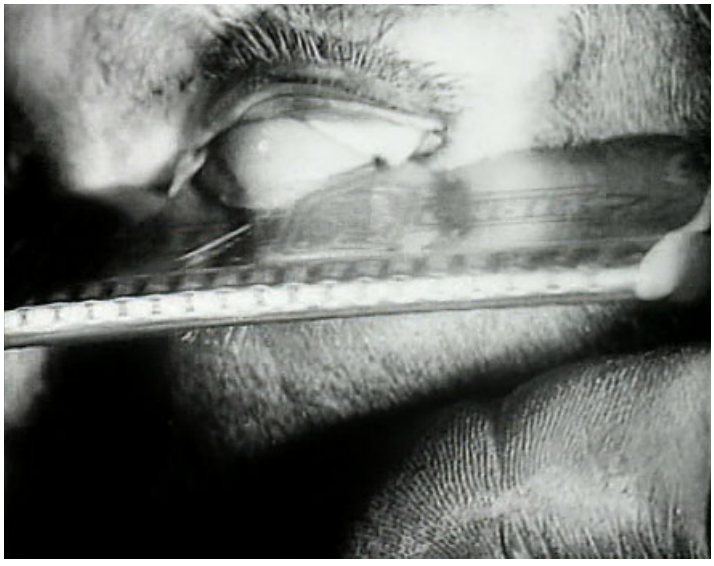


Figure 5.1 A suppurating eye in *Un chien andalou*. Luis Buñuel.



Figure 5.2 A severed hand in *Un chien andalou*. Luis Buñuel.

human and animal, and the violence that can be inflicted on it in the context of a film that passes no judgment, offers no explanation, and erects no moral guardrails around what can come to pass. This is the realm of the unconscious in which psychoanalysis suggests that we are all killers (see Fuss, 1995: 100). The no-holds-barred assault on bourgeois acceptability in this regard is both humorous in the individual collisions it involves and deadly serious in its overall intent. While thinking and feeling, mind and body combine in the early twentieth-century avant-garde vision of the soul, and in Freud's thinking, psychoanalysis reaches its explanatory limits when faced with this film, not only because of the attention it pays to more than just subjective inner life – thereby stretching beyond the Freudian soul – but also because of the distance it takes from linguistic expression.

In a clever reading of the film, Stuart Liebman returns us to the talking cure that Freudian psychoanalysis professed to be from the outset, as he links the condensed, displaced images of the dreamlike logic to language, to what the images speak louder than words (Liebman, 1996: 143–158). The conversion from bodily experience to words is what psychoanalysis (of the Lacanian variety in particular) has been criticized for when taken into film studies, precisely because it focuses too closely on the signifying chain, and the possibility of translating embodied experience into language, rather than being left to feel the film experience as experience. Spectators may, however, feel the more extreme moments of *Un chien andalou*, not because they have been involved in any backstory or sympathize with anyone's or anything's plight, but because of the viscera that eschew. These moments exceed a curative, meaningful conversion to language through the punning associations of dream thinking, even as the lines that connect thought and feeling to words are

never fully severed. In the capacious, expansive sense of the soul that Buñuel offers (thinking, feeling, the brain conveying a dimension of the soul through the configurations of the screen the director has in mind from *découpage* onward), language has no place, and while this does not foreclose the expressive capacities of the silent cinema image, it throws us back to images that do not always invite a psychoanalytic response, and that are not always interested in talking their way to a cure, or to meaning. We are therefore not entirely in the zone of identification as psychoanalytic discourse intends, but, rather, closer to a phenomenological approach that feels its way through film rather than developing a psychological response. It is a gesture toward depth in interpretation across a privileging of surface that Buñuel and Dalí's film encourages, as it fleshes out their particular articulation of the enigma of the soul.

To speak of the soul today in an Anglophone context is frequently to be understood to conjure religious meanings alone. Buñuel's questioning relation to religion means that he sits uncomfortably and rather equivocally within a religiously informed understanding of his work. But, as has been observed, he does have recourse to the term "soul" in a sense that is dissociated from religion, and it is in this sense too that his work joins with the early French film theorists. Equally, his sense is also distinct from the view in which the soul stands as an entity apart from the body. While, following on from Impressionist film theory, the soul attaches itself to thinking, to mind, and by implication spirit, it is also grounded, materially, in the body within his work and is incarnated on the surface of this film. Brushing with religion in a deliciously disobedient manner, and grounding the ethereal flight of the winged soul in an embodied approach to thinking and feeling, Buñuel and Dalí's *Un chien andalou* lives the aberrance of the unconscious, incarnating the surreal soul as a function of its material processes from *découpage* to completion.

Notes

1 See Ramona Fotiade (1995) for a discussion of the controversy surrounding the film, not least the disagreement between Antonin Artaud and Dulac over the latter's execution of the former's screenplay.

2 There is much erudite debate in North American scholarship about the appropriateness of using the designation of French Impressionism for the diversity of filmmaking that characterized the period from 1918 to 1929 in France. While David Bordwell (1980) identifies a unified stylistic paradigm in *French Impressionist Cinema*, that both he and Kristin Thompson define in useful introductory detail in *Film History: An Introduction* (1994), J. Dudley Andrew (1995) questions the credibility of classifying French Impressionist Filmmaking as a movement and Richard Abel (1984) observes a far looser and more diverse grouping of styles. In a French context, Gilles Deleuze (1983) prefers to speak of the "pre-war French school." I retain the reference to French Impressionism here, *pace* Deleuze but mindful of these debates.

3 The response of Canudo and Delluc to Sjöström was powerful and welcoming from the outset. The melodrama *Thérèse* (1916) first made him famous in France, but it was the films released between 1917 and 1921 that had the best reception: *Terje Vigen* (A Man there Was, 1917) (based on a poem by Ibsen), but most notably *Berg-Ejvind och hans hustru* (The Outlaw and His Wife), *Les Proscrits*, and *La Charrette fantôme* (The Phantom Carriage), one of several of his films based on a text by Nobel prize-winning author Selma Lagerlöf. The qualities notable in Sjöström's work of the late teens in particular are psychological drama and realism, shot in the outdoors and on location, allowing the natural world to play a key role.

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6

Fixed-Explosive

Buñuel's Surrealist Time-Image

Ramona Fotiade

The five decades that separate the making of *Un chien andalou* (An Andalusian Dog, 1929) from the premiere of *Cet obscur objet du désir* (That Obscure Object of Desire, 1977) are not lacking in emphatic declarations of allegiance to the surrealist movement coming from the Spanish-born director, even well after Buñuel's split with the group in May 1932. "My connection with the surrealists" – he reminisced in 1982, the year before he died – "in many ways determined the course of my life" (Buñuel, 2003: 105). From this perspective, the intriguing appearance of pictorial references to Vermeer's *The Lacemaker* at regular intervals in Buñuel's career and, most conspicuously, in his first and last film, may not raise many eyebrows among those familiar with Surrealism and with Dalí's obsessive reworking of the Flemish master's work as part of his paranoia-critical method.[1] Undoubtedly, this image has come to occupy a special place in Buñuel's own visual syntax, mainly due to its disturbing subliminal association with the shot of the slit eye in *Un chien andalou* (as well as with similar figurations of tearing, wounding, and defilement in later films). One can therefore justifiably surmise that the director's belated return to Vermeer's painting in the last shot of his last film conveys more than a passing allusion to familiar surrealist iconography. Indeed, there is something uncanny about the careful re-enactment of the scene in the manner of a *tableau vivant*, something that Jean-Luc Godard would also experiment with and try to push to its limits in *Passion* (1982).

The female character in *Un chien andalou* contemplated a printed reproduction of *The Lacemaker*, her sight miraculously restored after the razor-blade attack on her eye in the prologue (Figure 6.1). Unlike her, Matteo (Fernando Rey) and Conchita (Carole Bouquet/Ángela Molina), the protagonists of *Cet obscur objet du désir*, look at a live shop window display in which a woman is mending a torn patch of a dress stained with blood and stretched on an embroidery hoop. The obvious reference to

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Figure 6.1 The female character in *Un chien andalou* (Luis Buñuel) contemplates a printed reproduction of Vermeer's *The Lacemaker*.

defloration and the assumed restitution of virginity within a voyeuristic and commercial context perfectly encapsulates Matteo and Conchita's sadomasochistic story of frustrated desire on the elusive boundary between feigned chastity and prostitution. But, on the other hand, the embroidery hoop only reinforces the latent analogy that *Un chien andalou* established from the outset between the lacemaker's round-shaped face leaning over her needlework and the two images that prefigure it: the moon sliced in half by a tapering cloud and the image of the slit eye. In Dalí's view, Vermeer's painting contained the same violence and shocking potential as the image of the slit eye (which was Buñuel's contribution to the script[2]):

> What moved me most about that painting was how everything converged exactly into one needle, in a pin that was not painted, but merely suggested. Very often I felt the pin's sharpness pierce my own flesh so realistically, that I would awaken frightened from the most heavenly naps. That painting has always been considered pleasant, and excessively restful. For me it possessed one of the most violent forces in the aesthetics domain, which can only be comparable to the recently discovered antiproton. (Dalí, cited in Delgado Morales, 2001: 38)[3]

While this intriguing passage may call to mind Roland Barthes's similar comments in *Camera Lucida* (1980) on the *punctum* of photography (the prick or the wound that signals the connection with death and the "intractable reality" of the past), Dalí's remark on the haptic quality of *The Lacemaker* more readily brings into view its function in *Un chien andalou* as the repressed signal of past trauma, which supplies the missing link between the horrifying episode situated "once upon a time" and the events apparently taking place "eight years later." However, it is not Dalí's obsessive concern with Vermeer's composition, but Buñuel's cameo appearance in the prologue that arrests our attention and compels us to reflect on the unprecedented authorial immolation of the cinematic gaze as the source of a subliminal interplay of blindness and vision, revulsion and fascination, repression and voyeuristic gratification which continues to resonate throughout the Spanish director's later work.

Having begun its cinematic trajectory as a seemingly anodyne visual quotation, propelled by its association with the slit eye shot in *Un chien andalou*, the lacemaker motif can be said to have evolved over several decades and several films – in particular *Viridiana* (1961), *Le Journal d'une femme de chambre* (The Diary of a Chambermaid, 1964), *Belle de jour* (1966), and *Tristana* (1970) – into a full-fledged meditation on the condition of the cinematic image. Although Gilles Deleuze does not credit Buñuel with the ability of moving beyond naturalistic cinema and breaking the shackles of the movement-image until relatively late in his career, there is little doubt that the theatrical restaging of Vermeer's *Lacemaker* in *Cet obscur objet du désir* achieves the quality of a "time-image" which supersedes the codes of the motor action cinema and turns into a "direct image of time," capable of bringing all temporal sheets and layers of meaning in dazzling synchronicity.[4] The final sequence, followed only by the shot of flames filling the screen as the explosion of an anarchist bomb suddenly interrupts Matteo and Conchita's silent argument, undoubtedly displays the double, paradoxical dimension of a "crystal-image" in which the virtual and the actual, past and present, death and life coexist.[5] The uncanny resurgence of the flat pictorial image in the shape of a *tableau vivant* seems to exert an irresistible fascination on Matteo and Conchita in the closing sequence of *Cet obscur objet du désir*. But it is in fact us, as spectators, who are implicitly prompted to witness this eerie transformation and relate it to the successive avatars of Vermeer's *Lacemaker* in *Un chien andalou*, *Él* (This Strange Passion, 1953), *La Mort en ce jardin* (Death in the Garden, aka The Diamond Hunters, 1956), *The Young One* (1960), *Viridiana*, *Le Journal d'une femme de chamber*, and so on.

The protagonists' reaction in *Cet obscur objet du désir* highlights the sense of disturbing indeterminacy that accompanies the advent of a new type of visual sign, according to Deleuze.[6] The time-image, and in particular its correlative, the "crystal-image," has a disconcerting effect because it is situated somewhere between the virtual and the actual, the physical and the mental, the real and the imaginary. The new optical and sound situations, as Deleuze further argues, institute a principle of indeterminability, of indiscernibility which means that "we no

longer know what is imaginary or real, physical or mental, in the situation, not because they are confused, but because we do not have to know and there is no longer even a place from which to ask" (2008a: 7). It might be that Buñuel's use of the time-image does not exactly fit the criteria which Deleuze derives from his discussion of Italian neorealist productions (in particular Fellini) or from his analysis of the French New Novel's interaction with cinema in the work of Robbe-Grillet. But while denying Buñuel's earlier films up to the mid-1960s the ability of transcending the sensory-motor action or situation – with a few notable exceptions, such as the dream scene in *Los olvidados* (The Forgotten Ones, aka The Young and The Damned, 1950) and the use of repetition in *El ángel exterminador* (The Exterminating Angel, 1962) – Deleuze nevertheless concedes that even in his naturalistic films, Buñuel moves beyond the symptoms and fetishes of the impulse-image in order to arrive at a new type of cinematic sign. For instance, in the concluding part of his analysis of *El ángel exterminador*, Deleuze argues:

> *[Buñuel] injects the power of repetition into the cinematographic image.* In this way he is already going beyond the world of impulses, to knock on the doors of time and free it from the slope of the cycles which still subjugated it to a content. Buñuel does not cling to symptoms and to fetishes, he elaborates another type of sign which might be called "scene" and which perhaps gives us a direct time-image. … But it is from inside that Buñuel goes beyond naturalism, without ever renouncing it. (2008a: 137, emphasis in original)

Deleuze's labeling of the new type of sign as "scene" might suggest an implicit emphasis on *mise en scène*, rather than montage, in Buñuel's elaboration of a personal time-image. This would tally with Deleuze's other remarks about Buñuel's use of "restrained means" and seamless editing, in contrast to René Clair's ostentatious display of technical prowess (Deleuze, 2008b: 56). And although Eisenstein's montage of attractions produced images in a mirror which Deleuze associates with the advent of the time-image (heralded by such self-reflexive devices as theatrical shows, paintings, and film-within-the-film constructions), it is nonetheless apparent that the crisis of the sensory-motor schema and of the movement-image resulted in the transition from the indirect representation of time through montage to the direct representation of time inside the sequence shot or even inside the frame, an idea which resonates with Tarkovsky's insistence on the internal rhythm of the shot and the time pressure within the frame). In many ways, Buñuel's and Tarkovsky's conceptions of the "poetics of cinema" can be said to agree as far as the relationship between editing and time is concerned:

> The distinctive time running through the shots makes the rhythm of the picture; and rhythm is determined not by the length of the edited pieces, but by the pressure of the time that runs through them. Editing cannot determine rhythm (in this respect it can only be a feature of style); indeed, time courses through the picture despite editing rather than because of it. (Tarkovsky, 1987: 117)

Buñuel himself stressed the importance of rhythm, which he considered to be "the objective of a 'cinematic film'" (Buñuel, 2000: 125–130), comparable to the modernist shift in painting from representation to abstraction. However, as Deleuze aptly remarked, it is from the confines of a naturalist (or in some cases, neorealist) framework that Buñuel breaks with the established conventions of realist representation in order to allow a different kind of image to emerge, an "image of thought," a "mental image." Ahead of the widely acclaimed pioneers of the "time-image" (such as Alain Resnais, Orson Welles, and Jean-Luc Godard), Buñuel highlighted the presence of montage as an inherent component of the shot. The idea of *découpage* (in the sense of mental composition or virtual montage as different from the material editing of the film in post-production) is, according to Buñuel, "like the lens, immanent in the notion of the film [for] the very act of setting one's camera before an object to be filmed presupposes the existence of a *découpage*" (2000: 134). But, as Deleuze pointed out, "this identity of montage with the image itself can appear only in conditions of the direct time-image" (2008b: 40). And it is with this new notion of montage as an intrinsic part of the shot (at the basic level of framing and cropping of the image but also, more generally, at the level of *mise en scène*) that one may begin to explore Buñuel's new type of cinematic sign, that Deleuze calls "the scene."

In the dream sequence in *Los olvidados*, for instance, which Deleuze uses to illustrate the disruption of the conventional movement-image framework by the emergence of purely optical and sound situations, montage intervenes in a less conspicuous manner than lighting, camera angle, and slow motion to convey the state of extreme sensory-motor relaxation. There are only two or three startling cuts featuring changes in the position of the camera and the framing of consecutive shots such as the transition from the mid-shot of Pedro raising himself up in bed (as we hear his voice, off-screen, calling his mother) to the general shot of the room with his mother facing the camera in the foreground and Pedro's figure propped on his elbow in the background, while his shadow looms large on the wall apparently facing left. This image, which is shot at a 90 degree angle in relation to the early part of the sequence (when the camera is placed beside Pedro, left of the screen, with his mother's bed in the background, to the right), is accompanied, on the soundtrack, by the boy's voice-off question: "Mama! Why didn't you give me any meat that night?" and ends with Martha (the mother) starting to turn away from the camera to face Pedro in the background. The next image is a mid-shot of Martha turning to face the camera and revealing a large piece of raw meat that she is holding in her hand. At this point in the sequence, the dreamer's immobility and the disconnection of his perceptions of movement from any possible extension into action brings out most compellingly the substitution of the sensory-motor schema by something Deleuze calls "the movement of the world":

> Characters do not move, but, as in animated film, the camera causes the movement of the path on which they change places, "motionless at a great pace." The world takes responsibility for the movement that the subject can no longer or cannot make

> […] in Buñuel's *Los olvidados*, in the dream of the Virgin with the chunk of meat, the child is slowly sucked towards the meat rather than thrusting himself forward. (2008b: 56–57)

Deleuze's peculiar identification of the mother with the Virgin in Pedro's dream is certainly indicative of a key recurrent motif in Buñuel's films – from *Viridiana* to *La Voie lactée* (The Milky Way, 1969), from *El ángel exterminador* to *Cet obscur objet du désir* – but it does not in itself constitute the first and foremost element pointing to the temporally disrupted world of the dream and to the aberrant movement that ensues. Montage, as visual marker and indirect signifier of time, also fails to express the deeply unsettling effect of the collapse of sensory-motor relationships in the dream-image. It is at the level of lighting, slow motion, and sound–image asynchrony that Buñuel's new type of image is most strikingly expressed. The memorable image of Martha getting up and walking in slow motion on her bed and across the dark room to Pedro, a luminous figure floating in mid-air, bears a compelling resemblance to the dream scene in Tarkovsky's *Zerkalo* (The Mirror, 1975), in which the mid-shot of the adult protagonist caressing the hand of his wife (a character identical at times with the recollection-image of his young mother) leads to the general shot of the room with the white-gowned body of the woman suspended in the air, lying asleep several feet above the bed. The presence of brass bedsteads in otherwise bare or impoverished surroundings, combined with the sharp contrast photography and the use of slow motion further underscores the resemblance between the two directors' treatment of the anomalous movement and spatiotemporal configuration of dreams. The dark vertical projections of the numerous bedstead railings around the room and across Martha's white figure (a pattern reproduced later by the shadow of a window frame when she goes to see Pedro after the trial) suggestively mark both the dream vision of the home and the real surroundings of the courtroom as spaces of imprisonment, that anticipate Pedro's placement in a detention center and his tragic demise. Truffaut will skillfully revive the same visual motif in the film that launched the New Wave, *Les quatre cents coups* (The Four Hundred Blows, 1959). It is no wonder that, given Buñuel's close collaboration with Gabriel Figueroa (a former student of Gregg Toland, the legendary cameraman who lit *Citizen Kane*, 1941), *Los olvidados* won an award for best cinematography in Mexico, and the prize for best director at the Cannes festival in 1951.

However, another equally effective technique in the dream sequence consists of the use of sound–image asynchrony, which Deleuze firmly associated with the birth of the time-image, illustrated with references to iconic films such as Alain Resnais's *L'Année dernière à Marienbad* (Last Year at Marienbad, 1961) and Duras's *India Song* (1975). While "slow motion frees movement from its moving body to make a sliding of world, a sliding of ground" and provide the image of "a depersonalized movement" (Deleuze, 2008b: 57, 87), the disconnection between the close-up shots of the protagonists and the soundtrack (as we hear their voice-off

dialogue but we do not see their lips move) enhances the eerie impression of a dislocation in time. Added to this is the noise of rushing wind mingled with the background music, which builds up gradually as the scene progresses, reaching its climax when Martha turns around and faces the camera holding the piece of raw meat in her hand. When she breaks into a smile, a flash of lightning illuminates her face, and the sound of thunder further compounds the ominous change of tone. Martha is then seen holding out the piece of meat, her hair flying in the wind that blows harder and harder throughout the final episode as Jaibo's hand, followed by his torso, emerges from under the bed and wrests the piece of meat from Pedro. Buñuel had already juxtaposed the sound of wind blowing with shots of a domestic interior in *L'Âge d'or* (The Golden Age, 1930), in which he subverted the codes of realist *mise en scène* by replacing the female protagonist's reflection in the mirror with the image of clouds drifting as she is seated at her dressing table, her hair ruffled by the wind. More than a predictable Magrittean touch to a manifestly surrealist film, such early occurrences of purely optical and sound situations (especially in the context of Buñuel's first *film sonore et parlant*, i.e., sound and talking film) signal his ability to use spatial and temporal incongruities to break free from the realist mold of the classical Hollywood continuity system while also taking a parodic stab at the conventions of the French Impressionist cinema. Already in *Un chien andalou*, Buñuel experimented with illogical spatial juxtapositions blurring the boundaries between indoor and outdoor locations. The penultimate episode in the film ends with the young woman (Simone Mareuil) sticking her tongue out in defiance and jeering through a half-closed door, as she leaves the room in which her encounter with the man (Pierre Batcheff) has taken place, only to find herself in outdoor surroundings, with the wind blowing as she turns to face the camera: the next shot reveals she is on the beach.

But let us not forget the paradoxical sound effects that Buñuel introduces in his silent surrealist short with the disjunction between the shot of a habitual source of noise (a man ringing the bell) and its unexpected corresponding sound (two hands shaking a cocktail shaker through holes cut in the wall). If this may be said to remain at the level of a mere visual gag, frustrating the expectations of an audience that was more accustomed to live piano accompaniments or the realistic sound effects of the silent era, the intriguing soundtrack motif in *L'Âge d'or*, which mixes the noise of the wind, of barking and cow-bells as Lya Lys is day-dreaming in front of the mirror, also works to ensure the temporal simultaneity of two otherwise spatially disconnected shots (that of Gaston Modot being dragged by a plain-clothes policeman in the streets of Paris and that of his lover, alone in her bedroom). Just as the soundtrack cannot be said to fulfill a simply illustrative function (because the image in the mirror is a paradoxical actualization of a virtual, mental image, otherwise completely absent in Gaston Modot's shot), Buñuel's idea goes further than endorsing the mimetic conception of photography as "mirror with a memory." In taking the metaphorical meaning of the saying quite literally, the surrealist substitution of the woman's reflection in the mirror with the image of clouds renders

something immaterial (a recollection-image or a dream-image, an "image of thought") manifest through an ingenious trick shot. As far as parallel editing is concerned in the sequence, the manner in which the temporal simultaneity of spatially discontinuous scenes is achieved through the continuity of the oneiric soundtrack only serves to reinforce Tarkovsky's assertion that "time courses through the picture despite editing rather than because of it" (1987: 117).

On closer examination, Deleuze's tagging of the new Buñuelian film sign as "scene" elicits a long overdue reassessment of the critic's theory of the "time-image" in light of the surrealist visual aesthetics (more specifically, Breton's conception of beauty[7] and Dalí's paranoia-critical method) that actively shaped the Spanish director's view of cinema. For if it is true that Buñuel's distinctive contribution to "setting time free" from its subordination to movement resided in his attempt at "subjecting the image to the power of repetition-variation" (a stylistic device particularly noticeable in *El ángel exterminador*), it is no less apparent that he derived his taste for illogical juxtapositions and inexplicable recurring visual patterns from the surrealist exploration of the unconscious and the idea of the poetic image as the spark arising from the clash of opposite, incompatible realities. Like Breton and the surrealist film critic Jacques Brunius, Buñuel believed that cinema was invented "to express the life of the subconscious, the roots of which reach so deeply into poetry" (2000: 139), even if this is seldom the case with modern film productions. His uncompromising critique of neorealism brings out the importance he attached to giving free reign to one's imagination, to the poetic powers of the unconscious, and to the unexpected associations of ideas expressed in dreams: "Neorealist reality is incomplete, conventional, and above all rational; poetry, mystery, everything that completes and enlarges tangible reality is entirely missing from its works" (2000: 140). The hasty critical alignment of *Los olvidados* with neorealist aesthetics and ideology has too often ignored Buñuel's unswerving commitment to the surrealist idea of the revolutionary impact of dream images and the inherently poetic quality of unconscious visions. The presence of surrealist elements even in some of Buñuel's most undeniably realist productions, such as *Las Hurdes*, aka *Tierra sin pan* (Land without Bread, 1933), the documentary that Buñuel completed not long after the premiere of *L'Âge d'or*, is clearly apparent: "I made *Las Hurdes*" – Buñuel declared in an interview with André Bazin in 1955 – "because I had a surrealist vision and because I was interested in the problem of man. I saw reality in a different manner from the way I'd seen it before Surrealism" (cited in Aranda, 1976: 90–91). The stark contrast between the clinically detached voice-over commentary and the nightmarish visions of poverty, squalor, and disease in *Las Hurdes* reminds one of the similarly incongruous, yet somehow ominous, juxtaposition of the short documentary-like sequence on scorpions and the bandits in *L'Âge d'or*. Buñuel's constant pairing of cool, pseudo-scientific objectivity and unsettling images (ranging from subtle subliminal fear to irrepressible dread or revulsion) deserves to be investigated on its own as a surrealist strategy for subverting the established codes of realist or "neorealist" representation.



Figure 6.2 The man shot by the cyclist in the bedroom falls on the lawn of a park in *Un chien andalou*. Luis Buñuel.

However, let us stop to consider for a moment the process by which Buñuel seems to uphold and at the same time undermine what Deleuze calls a "naturalistic" setting in *El ángel exterminador*, so that he eventually breaks with the cycle of mechanical repetition in order to achieve a genuine image of time. The characters in *El ángel exterminador*, just like the couple formed by the cyclist and the woman in *Un chien andalou*, find themselves trapped within the confines of a room, and struggle to retain control over increasingly unstable real surroundings. Although in one of the dramatic scenes in *Un chien andalou* we see the woman trying to close the door in which the man's hand swarming with ants has been caught after she has apparently managed to escape him, the next shot reveals the man lying in bed behind her, wearing the same white collar, apron, and wooden box with diagonal stripes as in the previous sequence. Logically different locations thus collapse into one inescapable space within whose altered spatiotemporal confines the characters are forced to interact as in a dream. Conversely, spatially adjoining rooms or areas of an identical indoor location turn out to be separated by vast distances, such as the sequence in which the body of the older man shot by the cyclist in the bedroom falls on the lawn of a park (Figure 6.2). The intervention of dreams, hallucinations, or unconscious recollections in a situation of spatial confinement, like that portrayed in *El ángel exterminador*, similarly heightens the viewer's discomfort at the perceived disparity between the explicitly theatrical, "naturalistic" setting (which prompts Deleuze's use of the term "scene") and the incongruous spatial and temporal associations. Just as the narrative fabric of the film begins to disintegrate under the pressure of collective or individual excursions into the "supernatural"

world of agonizing visions, deliriums, magic incantations, and nightmares, one begins to realize that Buñuel's theatrical *mise en scène* (which resembles so closely the labyrinthine, claustrophobic spaces in Resnais's *L'Année dernière à Marienbad*) corresponds to the inner "scene" or stage of unconscious events rather than to a faithful transposition of reality as an external, objective state of affairs. Irrationality is thus allowed to erupt in the midst of perfectly ordered, logical, "bourgeois" surroundings with the devastating force of an anarchist bomb. The "three-year sojourn in the exalted and chaotic ranks" of the surrealist movement not only changed Buñuel's life forever but also taught him that cinema could grant the artist and the viewer "access to the depths of the self" (Buñuel, 2003: 123), freeing his imagination from the shackles of chronology and objective duration:

> Brunius has observed that the night that gradually falls in the movie theatre is equivalent to the act of closing the eyes. It is then that, on the screen and in the depths of the individual, the incursion into the night of the subconscious begins. As in dreams, images appear and disappear through dissolves and shadows; time and space become flexible, shrinking and expanding at will; chronological order and relative lengths of time no longer correspond to reality; actions come full circle, whether they take a few minutes or several centuries; movements speed past the delays. (Buñuel, 2000: 139)

But the surrealist notion that most accurately seems to prefigure Deleuze's conception of the time-image, while also neatly encapsulating Buñuel's belief in the subversive potential of cinema "as an instrument of poetry," is Breton's idea of convulsive beauty as "fixed-explosive." Although Breton explicitly formulated his tripartite theory of beauty several years after the premiere of Buñuel's surrealist productions, the building blocks of his aesthetics had been laid out in the *First and Second Surrealist Manifestos* (1924, 1929), *Surrealism and Painting* (1928), and *Nadja* (1928). The idea of "convulsive beauty" which Breton first expounded in the concluding part of *Nadja*, as the creative surrealist reappraisal of mental alienation (away from the reductive interpretations current in clinical psychology), received three further correlatives in *L'Amour fou* (Mad Love, 1937): "convulsive beauty will be veiled-erotic, fixed-explosive, magic-circumstantial, or it will not be" (1987: 19). The lavishly illustrated issue of the art magazine *Minotaure* in which the first chapter of Breton's book was published in 1934, under the heading "La Beauté convulsive," draws particular attention to the "fixed-explosive" dimension of the notion, with Man Ray's image of a Flamenco dancer caught in a swirl of fabric occupying the left page, while Brassaï's photograph of crystals runs horizontally above the title and the beginning of the article on the right. Breton's account of fixed-explosive beauty and the further remarks he makes about the analogy between the emergence of the surrealist poetic image and the spontaneous process of crystal formation bears more than a conjectural resemblance to Deleuze's conception of the time-image and the crystal-image. And this is not only because of the emphasis that Breton sets on the quality of images from which movement has just been expelled, though it subsists as a paradoxical simultaneity of swiftness and immobility, just like

the legendary photograph of a "speeding locomotive abandoned for years to the delirium of the virgin forest."[8] Deleuze himself signals the link between the early cinematic portrayal of perceptual distortion during altered states of consciousness (such as amnesia, hallucination, madness, or dreams) and the crisis of the movement-image. The represented impossibility of optical and sound perceptions to extend into action prefigures the demise of the established sensory-motor codes and the advent of the time-image. In taking the example of the early Soviet Cinema, of German Expressionist productions, and of the French avant-garde of the 1920s, Deleuze remarks on the common denominator of such perceptual phenomena:

> In fact the common factor in all these states is that a character finds himself prey to visual and sound sensations (or tactile ones, cutaneous or coenaesthetic) which have lost their motor extension. This may be a limit-situation, the imminent arrival or consequence of an accident, the nearness of death but also the ordinary states of sleep, dream, or a disturbance of attention. (2008b: 53)

When Breton provided his definitive conception of the visual work of art in *Surrealism and Painting* (1928) by stating, in the same apodictic tone as in *Nadja*, that artistic creation will have to refer to a "purely interior model" or it will not be, he clearly had in mind the exploration of subliminal and unconscious visions, dreams, and phenomena of optical illusion or simulated madness on which Surrealism as a movement was founded. But the choice of the arrested motion image to illustrate the idea of "fixed-explosive" beauty also poignantly recalls the surrealist fascination with photography and cinema not so much for their mimetic subservience to external reality, as for their inherent ability of undermining our habitual, objective perceptions in order to allow for the emergence of a "purely internal model." In perfect agreement with Deleuze's definition of the time-image, Surrealism had long called for a new poetic and revolutionary understanding of photography and cinema as "images of thought." Man Ray's exploration of the subtle frontier between motion and repose, the quick succession of still images during the projection of a reel of film, on the one hand, and the fixed composition of the photographic frame, on the other, equally highlights the phenomenon of optical illusion involved in the perception of cinematic movement. As with the examples of altered states of consciousness discussed by Deleuze which he illustrates with reference to the use of dissolves, soft focus, freeze frame, or slow motion images, the "fixed-explosive" photograph draws attention to something that should have remained hidden, invisible under normal circumstances: the moment in between two consecutive states of a body in motion, an instant of suspended action through which time rather than movement is made visible.

Buñuel's own belief in the revolutionary power of the visual poetics of cinema often found expression in the explicit allusions to terrorist attacks – for instance in *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* (The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie, 1972), as well as in visual quotations or re-enactments of popular uprisings, such as the

archive footage insert in *L'Âge d'or*, when Gaston Modot is on the phone with the minister. The shattering effect of surrealist iconoclasm acquires a literal visual transposition in at least three enigmatic concluding scenes: the epilogue of *El ángel exterminador* (when rioting demonstrators confront the helmeted police who end up firing at the crowd), the final scene in *Le Fantôme de la liberté* (The Phantom of Liberty, 1974) (with a similar mix of loud bell tolling and firing on the soundtrack juxtaposed with the close-up of an ostrich head looking around startled), and of course the very last shot of *Cet obscur objet du désir* (when the flames and smoke of a terrorist bomb suddenly engulf the screen). The violent demise of Matteo and Conchita, coming just seconds after their gazing in rapt fascination upon the lace-maker mending the bloodied cloth, not only provides a striking cinematic equivalent to Man Ray's arrested motion-image of "fixed-explosive" beauty but also suggestively translates the ravaging effect of the unconscious realization occasioned by the preceding scene which then literally appears to blow the couple's and the viewer's perceptual faculties to pieces. Just as the unprecedented onslaught on the cinematic gaze in *Un chien andalou* already pointed to a limiting situation and a radical break with tradition, the "fixed-explosive" manifestation of beauty corresponds to the catalytic impact of an unconscious process of recognition which brings to light something hidden with devastating consequences. Deleuze equally emphasized the distinctive revelatory nature of purely optical and sound situations that mark the crisis of the movement-image and the emergence of the time-image:

> A purely optical and sound situation does not extend into action, any more than it is induced by an action. It makes us grasp, it is supposed to make us grasp, something intolerable and unbearable. … It is a matter of something too powerful, or too unjust, but sometimes also too beautiful, and which henceforth outstrips our sensory-motor capacities. (2008b: 17)

In a passage which seems to echo Breton's comments on the disturbing, yet strangely illuminating quality of accidental encounters with so-called *objets trouvés* (found objects) as external materializations of repressed, unconscious desire, Deleuze refers to the unbearable intensity of time-images in terms of a sudden "revelation": "But this means that the unbearable itself is inseparable from a revelation or an illumination, as from a third eye. … The important thing is always that the character or the viewer, and the two together, become visionaries" (2008b: 18). To Breton, the notion of convulsive beauty is not only implicated in the Freudian uncanny, or the "magical-circumstantial" coincidence between inner obscure emotions and their apparently reified external projections (in the case of the *trouvaille* or the found object), but can also trigger the instantaneous gelling together and reshaping of apparently incongruous forms of expression to arrive at a perfect, crystal-like elucidation of the most obscure and winding unconscious processes. The homage that Breton pays in *Mad Love* to the crystalline structure (as visual correlate of the ideal conjunction between one's artistic and existential pursuits)

resonates with Deleuze's own comments on the momentary and indeterminate co-presence of logically exclusive, opposite elements in the crystal. The definitive, if momentary, revelation that Breton associates with the image of crystals or with the inanimate–animate composite that the coral reef constitutes in the biological realm, can only come about as a result of "objective chance" and not deliberate personal striving: "[Convulsive] beauty cannot appear except from the poignant feeling of the thing revealed, the integral certainty produced by the emergence of a solution, which, by its very nature, could not come to us along ordinary logical paths …. The image, such as it is produced in automatic writing, has always constituted for me a perfect example of this" (Breton, 1987: 13).

The irresistible fascination that some of Buñuel's most successful crystal images exert on the viewer relies on the sudden disclosure of deep-seated conflicting emotions that find an unexpected outlet either in visually unbearable juxtapositions (the slit eye), in a string of perceptual disturbances and transformations (the shots linked through dissolves in *Un chien andalou*), or indeed in the uncanny confrontation with an inexplicably unsettling scene which inspires both awe and revulsion (such as the lacemaker sequence in *Cet obscur objet du désir*). Intended as "nothing other than a desperate, impassioned call for murder" (Buñuel, 2000: 162), according to Buñuel, *Un chien andalou* effectively combines Dalí's paranoia-critical method and the parodic use of dissolve transitions to achieve a disturbing alternation between virtual and actual images allowing for a different cinematic configuration of dreams on the screen, no longer conceived as "metaphors" (symbolical substitutes of unconscious thought processes) but as "a series of anamorphoses" (Deleuze, 2008b: 54, 55) that constantly shift the boundaries between the real and the imaginary, past and present, inner and outer space, the self and the other.

Although Buñuel was a keen supporter of the surrealist belief in abolishing all arbitrary oppositions between dreams and waking consciousness, past and future, the expressible and the inexpressible, the peculiar brand of time-image that the Spanish director elaborated from the early 1930s onward displayed strong affinities with Georges Bataille's dissident conception of the *informe*. The author of the scandalous *Histoire de l'oeil* (The History of the Eye, 1928), which Breton castigated for "obscenity," apparently approached Buñuel shortly after the premiere of *Un chien andalou*, "because of the outrageous eye scene" (2003: 122). But Dalí was already gravitating dangerously close to the orbit of this dark star, whose influential publication, *Documents* (1929–1930), was gathering the support of disaffected members of Surrealism after the purges of the late 1920s. The Spanish painter's preference for scatological imagery, mixed with sexually explicit details, such as in *Le jeu lugubre* (The Lugubrious Game), rhymed with Bataille's provocative investment in amorphous "base matter" (excrement, spittle, bodily fluids) as well as processes of dismemberment, mutilation, and decay likely to shock and provoke revulsion. Bataille included a comment on *Le jeu lugubre* in one of the essays he published in *Documents* in 1929, the year that saw the publication of *The Second Surrealist Manifesto*. His alternative visual aesthetics, which was clearly at odds with

Breton's notion of the "marvellous" and the mainstream surrealist idea of "mad love," found support in Dalí's personal exploration of formlessness through "double images" and anamorphosis as part of the paranoia-critical method. No one can fail to notice the disconcerting pairing of erotic desire and base matter through parallel editing in the opening sequence in *L'Âge d'or* in which the separated lovers long for each other, Gaston Modot still rolling in the mud where he was cavorting with Lya Lys, while she is daydreaming of him on a toilet seat, with images of a toilet roll on fire, molten and bubbling mud interspersed for good measure. If we add to this the abrupt intervention of a flushing toilet in the midst of a soundtrack dominated by Wagner, it is surprising that Breton could have considered *L'Âge d'or* as a passionate defense of surrealist love, rather than a sarcastic and decidedly anti-idealistic portrayal of frustrated desire.

Recurrent images of mutilated bodies and severed limbs (such as the hand in the middle sequence in *Un chien andalou* which crops up again in Ana's delirious vision in *El ángel exterminador*, the cripple in *Los olvidados*, or Sévérine's amputated leg and wooden prosthesis in *Tristana*) signal the presence of a darker view of the human condition and of a conception of beauty that is more in tune with Lautréamont's and Baudelaire's poetics of malaise, decay, and cruelty, or indeed with Sade's idea of love than with the mainstream surrealist eulogy of heterosexual male desire. The portrayal of female sexuality in *Belle de jour* (1967), just like the itinerant musings on religion in *La Voie lactée* or on the question of objective chance in *Le Fantôme de la liberté*, break free from the confines of both naturalist and surrealist *mise en scène* precisely because of an aesthetics of excess that always undercuts sublime emotion with revulsion or disgust. Even if "convulsive beauty" implicitly mixes delight and dread, Buñuel always pushed the unpleasant, sometimes grotesque or subliminally threatening element of the image to its limits in an attempt to jolt the spectator from his or her position of passive voyeurism. Nowhere has Buñuel more eloquently expressed man's ambivalent relationship to the excessive and inaccessible beauty of the loved woman (always simultaneously a virgin and a prostitute) than in his last film, *Cet obscur objet du désir*, in which Conchita is played all along by two very different actresses, Ángela Molina and Carole Bouquet. "The mystery remains intact right up until the final explosion," Buñuel remarked. "In addition to the theme of the impossibility of ever truly possessing a woman's body, the film insists upon maintaining that climate of insecurity and imminent disaster" (2003: 250). The violent build-up of repressed desire that permeates the entire narrative due to the constant juxtaposition of defilement and adulation, desecration and devotion, is suddenly unleashed in the lacemaker scene, watched in turn by "the virgin" and by "the prostitute" Conchita, and pointing to an unbearable limit of cinematic visibility, beyond which the image can only turn in a metanarrative gesture back on itself. The final explosion does not reiterate the anarchistic attack on the cinematic gaze inaugurated by *Un chien andalou* but ultimately allows for a glimpse of time through the two-way mirror of the camera which made Buñuel state that "the white eyelid of the screen need only reflect the light that is its own to blow up the universe" (2000: 136).

Notes

1 See, for instance, Dalí's 1926 painting, *Girl from Figueres*, a free rendition of Vermeer's *Lacemaker* in the style of Modern Art canvases, featuring a seated girl sewing on a balcony which faces a sharply executed, limpid urban landscape. Dalí mentions "the grandiose dimensions" of Vermeer's painting in the context of the new aesthetic possibilities opened up by cinematic vision in his article "Art Film, Antiartistic Film," published in *La gaceta literaria* (Madrid) in 1927. About the same time, during the late 1920s, Dalí started to elaborate his paranoia-critical method which introduced the idea of a hallucinatory process that subverted the fixed representation of objects and replaced it with multiple simultaneous images such as those in *The Lugubrious Game, The Great Masturbator*, and *The Invisible Man* (all completed in 1929). The early delirious association of Vermeer's composition with the shape of the rhinoceros's horn (which Dalí's autobiographical account traces back to his childhood) explains the latent erotic undertones of this recurrent visual motif, most prominently illustrated by paintings such as *Young Virgin Auto-Sodomized by her own Chastity* (1954). In 1954–1955, Dalí painted a copy of *The Lacemaker* at the Louvre in Paris then staged a spectacle at Vincennes Zoo in Paris in which he continued his work on the Paranoiac-Critical Study of Vermeer's *Lacemaker* from within the rhinoceros pen. The unfinished film by Robert Decharnes entitled *L'Histoire prodigieuse de la dentellière et du rhinocéros* (Prodigious History of the Lacemaker and the Rhinoceros, 1954–1962) was meant to document all stages of Dalí's paranoia-critical study of Vermeer's painting.

2 "When I arrived to spend a few days at Dalí's house in Figueras, I told him about a dream I'd had in which a long, tapering cloud sliced the moon in half, like a razor blade slicing through an eye" (Buñuel, 2003: 103).

3 From Salvador Dalí, "Aspects phénoménologiques de la méthode paranoïaque-critique," lecture at the University of the Sorbonne, December 17, 1955, quoted and translated into English in Delgado Morales (2001).

4 See for instance, Gilles Deleuze (2008b: 97). Although Deleuze initially illustrates his notion of "chronosign" with reference to Alain Resnais's *L'Année dernière in Marienbad* (Last Year in Marienbad, 1959), he immediately adds that, "Subjecting the image to a power of repetition-variation was already Buñuel's contribution, and a way of setting time free, of reversing its subordination to movement" (2008b: 99). Our analysis will focus on this aspect of Buñuel's later work while highlighting the presence of distinctive elements of the time-image in his early surrealist films.

5 Although Deleuze does not comment on this sequence in particular, he remarks that in Buñuel's last film the "naturalist cosmology, based on the cycle and the succession of cycles, gives way to a plurality of simultaneous worlds; to a simultaneity of presents in different worlds. These are not subjective (imaginary) points of view in one and the same world, but one and the same event in different objective worlds, all implicated in the event, inexplicable universe" (2008b: 100).

6 "No longer being induced by an action, any more than it is extended into one, the optical and sound situation is, therefore, neither an index nor a synsign. There is a new breed of signs, opsigns and sonsigns" (2008b: 6). "The crystal-image is, then, the point of indiscernability of the two distinct images, the actual and the virtual, while what we see in the crystal is time itself" (2008b: 79).

7 Breton initially elaborated his conception of beauty in The First Surrealist Manifesto (1924) and The Second Surrealist Manifesto (1929), in *Surrealism and Painting* (1928), and in *Nadja* (1928) which ends with the emphatic statement: "Beauty will be convulsive or will not be at all." He further developed this conception in *Les Vases communicants* (The Communicating Vessels, 1932) and *L'Amour fou* (Mad Love, 1937) where he provided the often quoted tripartite definition of surrealist beauty as "veiled-erotic, fixed-explosive and magic circumstantial." For a full presentation of Breton's aesthetics in relation to surrealist cinema see my chapter (Fotiade, 2007).

8 "The word 'convulsive,' which I use to describe the only beauty which should concern us would lose any meaning in my eyes were it to be conceived in motion and not at the exact expiration of this motion. There can be no beauty at all, as far as I am concerned – convulsive beauty – except at the cost of affirming the reciprocal relations linking the object seen in its motion and in its repose. I regret not having been able to furnish, along with the text, the photograph of a speeding locomotive abandoned for years to the delirium of a virgin forest" (Breton, 1987: 10). The photograph will eventually materialize in the form of an illustration in an article by Benjamin Péret in 1937.

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7

L'Âge d'or

Agustín Sánchez Vidal

Historical Context

The making of *L'Âge d'or* (The Golden Age, 1930), Luis Buñuel's second film, was made possible thanks to the patronage of Vicomte Charles and Marie-Laure de Noailles, notable cinephiles, who had been impressed with *Un chien andalou* (An Andalusian Dog, 1929). During mid-November 1929, they proposed to Buñuel and Salvador Dalí that they would finance the sequel. Originally, it was to going to be called *La Bête andalouse* (An Andalusian Beast), a title that was probably based on Henry Miller's suggestion to Buñuel in a lengthy letter, where he stated his endless admiration for the debut short film, even though he would have preferred the title *Une chienne andalouse*.

The Noailles' proposal took it as given that the sequel would have sound film, and that it would make its premiere as a birthday gift from Charles to Marie-Laure in their luxurious Parisian mansion where they had equipped their French salon with sound, making it one of the first to have audio capability. In successive phases, the ambition and length of the film would grow until it reached an hour in length. In addition to that, it would be made with a budget that the Viscount put at the disposal of Buñuel and Dalí, a sum that would eventually reach 715,500 francs (Bouhours and Schoeller, 1993: 6–8; David, 1994: 383–427).

At the end of November 1929, Buñuel left Paris for Cadaqués in order to meet with Dalí to write the script in the summer home that Dali's family owned in the Catalan Costa Brava. However, the harmonious collaboration that had occurred when they worked together in January of the same year did not happen again. During the summer, Dalí had received a visit from Paul Éluard and his wife Gala with whom Dalí initiated a relationship that would radically change his life, as well as his friendship with Buñuel. Luis Buñuel finished the script on his own; however, much later the duo would meet each other in Paris in December 1929 and exchange ideas about the project.

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Dalí's problems continued to accumulate. His widowed father had expelled him from the family's home in Figueras due to the text Dalí had included in the painting *Le Sacré Coeur* (1929): "Sometimes I spit with pleasure on my mother's portrait." The phrase would later reappear as an example of the new morals in the manifesto written by Surrealists in support of the *L'Âge d'or*.

Under these circumstances – his financially bankrupt art dealer, and ill Gala, and the loss of economic support from his father – the artist anxiously awaited the opportunities that the film would bring. However, Buñuel did not consult with Dalí during the shooting of the film, a gesture that Dalí interpreted as a form of betrayal but did not make obvious at that time. Dalí was extremely busy with Gala in the South of France, from where they traveled to Barcelona and Torremolinos. He became distant about the project with Buñuel, even more than during the discussions over authorship of *Un chien andalou*. The gradual yet steady distancing made Buñuel question Dalí's contribution to *Un chien andalou* and eventually he removed Dali's name from the credits. Regardless of these incidents, Dali's contribution was significant, given that he continued to write to Buñuel with a series of ideas that the filmmaker kept in consideration (Král, 1981: 44–40; Sánchez Vidal, 1988: 224–253).

To play the part of the male protagonist, Buñuel contracted veteran actor Gaston Modot, who accepted the role for half of his normal salary because of his friendship with Buñuel and his love for the Hispanic avant-garde (the director would revive him in 1955 for an episodic role in *Cela s'appelle l'aurore* (That Is the Dawn, 1956). The character of the lover would be assigned to the much less experienced German actress Lya Lys. Other performers and extras were contracted through casting agencies. For the most part, the extras in the party scene were White Russians who had worked for the production company Albatros. The bandits were led by Max Ernst and among them was the Spanish artist Pancho Cossío who had played the part of the Cojo Apasionado in *Un chien andalou*. Manuel Ángeles Ortiz, also a painter – and Spanish – played the part of the Forester. The part of the Inaugurator was performed by Josep Llorens Artigas, the ceramist who worked with Joan Miró. In different and distinct roles, brothers Pierre and Jacques Prévert – outstanding members of the French surrealist group – also appeared, together with the British Roland Penrose. Buñuel himself appears disguised as a *marista* during a fleeting moment in the garden sequence, crossing the walkway.

The film's production team was young in age. Besides Buñuel (30 years old) and Dalí (26), the directing assistants Jacques Brunius and Claude Heymann were 24 and 23 years old, although their experience went far beyond their age. Filming was carried out in Billancourt Studios and the sound sequences in Éclair-Menchen Studios in Épinay-sur-Seine, near Paris, during the month of March (all the dates correspond with the year 1930 and if not indicated others). Exterior Parisian street shots were added to these scenes. Then, in April, additional outdoor scenes were taken in Cape Creus, near Cadaqués, and in May, in Montmorency, in the immediate surroundings of the French capital. The sound system that was chosen came from the German-patented Tobisklangfilm, and, in the process, they weighed all decisions

and doubts related to the silent parts, including sections that were conceived as silent film, those that were planned with sound, and finally those that would be spoken.

The Vicomte de Noailles had proposed collaboration with Stravinsky on the musical score, but Buñuel declined the offer, introducing instead the music of Wagner, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Mozart, Debussy, and Schubert. To the score, he added drumrolls inspired by those from Calanda, and innovative techniques: for example, the voice "in off" or voice-over was used in the garden sequence.

The silent version premiered on May 27 at the Noailles estate. The enthused couple would begin to hold showings – then with sound – for friends beginning on June 30. Positive audience feedback prompted them to screen the film to a larger public on October 22 at the Pantheon Cinema (Cinéma Panthéon). It was then that feelings of reticence and irritation began to flourish among some attendees.

By then, Luis Buñuel had already left Paris for Spain in order to prepare for his trip to Hollywood, where he had been offered an invitation from the Metro Goldwyn Mayer's delegate in Paris who was also a good friend of the Noailles. Events precipitated with the commercial release of the film in Studio 28. For six days, the showing received a full house. Then on December 3 it provoked an attack from a group of extreme right-wingers who gutted the armchairs, smashed the paintings in the lobby (works by Arp, Dalí, Ernst, Miró, Man Ray, Tanguy), and stained the screen with paint.

The conservative press exhorted the police chief, Chiappe, to prohibit further screenings of the film. This personality – notorious for making life impossible for Eisenstein during his visit to Paris – did not hesitate in acceding to the demands. *L'Âge d'or* would be prohibited for the following 50 years. It would be allowed screening only in private showings and special circuits, but not in commercial venues. In 1980, it was distributed in New York and in 1981 in the French capital. Buñuel would get his revenge on Chiappe in the final sequence of *Le Journal d'une femme de chambre* (The Diary of a Chambermaid, 1964), where extreme-right protesters cheer on the prefect.

The attack from the most reactionary sectors provoked the Surrealists in favor of the film to create a manifesto to show support. Sparing nothing in self-promotion, the pamphlet that accompanied entrance tickets into Studio 28 stated about the film, "to date this is among one of the best works on vindication that has been demanded of the human consciousness." Later, in André Breton's book *L'Amour fou* (Crazy Love, written between 1934 and 1936 and published in 1937), he asserts that he wanted to see in it, "The only enterprise of exaltation of total love such as I envisage it," a demonstration that "in such a love there exists potentially a veritable *golden age* in complete rupture with the age of mud Europe is going through and of a richness inexhaustible with *future* possibilities" (Breton, 1978: 79–80).

Although such support was shown in public, in private, doubts and disappointments were voiced openly, especially anything that was related to Buñuel, considering that he had abdicated and succumbed to the pressures of the moment, whereas Dalí had remained firm in his surrealist convictions. In fact, it was Dalí alone who faced the consequences of the scandal while Buñuel was in Hollywood (Martín, 2010: 37–54).

Rumors of Breton's unease reached Madrid and would be picked up by Ernesto Giménez Caballero on December 15, 1930 in the Madrid-based avant-garde magazine *La gaceta literaria*, whose cinematographic layout had been designed by Buñuel. The rumors said the Surrealists expelled him from the group for having gone to Hollywood to work on a project that was unworthy of him.

In reality, the situation was much more complicated, and to gain a fuller understanding it is necessary to examine the vicissitudes between Breton and his companions just as much as the gradual estrangement between Buñuel and Dalí during the 1930s. The whole dynamic would accelerate during the beginning of 1932 due to the "affaire Aragón," when heartrending stances were made clear. During mid-March of the same year, Dalí wrote a letter to Buñuel accusing him of never having been a true Surrealist and for alienating himself alongside the Stalinists who Dalí considered to be among the most abominable of reactionary groups. The year 1932 was also the year when Buñuel officially abandoned the surrealist group, after sending a letter to the group's leader on May 6 where he stated that he had enlisted in the Spanish Communist Party (Breton, 1992: 1302; Gubern-Hammond, 2009: 117–118).

Political alienation of this kind incited the director to expurgate the title of his film to *Frozen Waters of Egotistical Calculation*, a phrase taken from the Communist Manifesto. Apparently, it was a "puerilely tranquil" version, as Breton lamented in *L'amour fou*. Buñuel edited it down to a little over 20 minutes and eliminated sequences such as the monstrance scene and the beating of the blind man. However, the film was still rejected by the censorship commission. There are no copies of the work and the only reference to it denotes it as a mixture of discarded materials taken from *Un chien andalou* and *L'Âge d'or*, resulting in a sampler of surrealist cinema (Gréville, 1995: 116).

The divorce between Buñuel and Dalí explains the diverse cinematographic trajectories that occur after 1933. In that year, Buñuel made the documentary *Las Hurdes*, aka *Tierra sin Pan* (Land without Bread, 1933) and in 1935–36 worked in the Madrid-based production company Filmófono on a commercial and populist cinema that would be interrupted by the Civil War. On Dalí's part, with such projects as *Five Minutes of Surrealism*, *Babauno*, *The Sanitary Goat*, and *A Film against Family* whose title he ended up not using, he initiated an unlikely task that would be destined to make his own voice heard in the film industry (Dalí, 2004: 1049–1099).

To finish this overview of the external circumstances surrounding *L'Âge d'or*, it is necessary to return to Dalí when he was in Spain during the year 1948 in order to recover information about some of the places where scenes were shot, as well as filmic projects that were never produced such as *La carretilla de carne* (The Wheelbarrow of Flesh) and *La sangre catalana* (Catalonian Blood) (Dalí, 2004: 1201–1219). According to their respective scripts, both would begin in Cape Creus, in the same location where Imperial Rome lays down its first rock in *L'Âge d'or*. In the second film one can observe an inauguration; in this case, it is a symbolic

monument to *La sangre catalana* – except this time, the person who should proclaim a discourse is Dalí holding an underwater diving mask in his hand, a full-scale vindication of his contributions to the film directed by Buñuel.

Structure

L'Âge d'or begins with the scientific documentary *Le Scorpion languedocien* (The Languedoc Scorpion) produced by Éclair in 1912. The captions came from entomologist Jean-Henri Fabre's *Souvenirs entomologiques* (1898–1907), a book that Buñuel assiduously read throughout his childhood.

One of the intertitles indicates, in reference to the arachnoid, "The tail is composed of five prismatic joints." Another continues, "The tail ends on the sixth vesicular articulation containing the venom reserve. The curved and sharp sting injects the poisonous liquid." It has been speculated that a parallel exists between the structure of the scorpion tail and that of the actual film, which would be also be composed of five grand segments and end with one final and virulent shot.

It is certain that in the beginning, Buñuel had envisioned filming some of the scorpions in Cape Creus, a scene that would then cut to a group of bandits seated in the same location, in order to establish a direct visual relation between two universes that are governed by instinct. However, filming difficulties forced him to substitute his original vision with the previously mentioned documentary footage.

After the caption, "A few hours later," the scene abruptly cuts to the landscape of Cape Creus in the Catalan Costa Brava that Dalí considered a geological delirium, a mineral alter ego: "I am convinced that I am Cape Creus and I incarnate the living nucleus of this backdrop. My existential obsession is to blend into Cape Creus, constantly. I am like it is – a forceful cathedral surrounded by a halo of oneiric delirium" (Dalí, 1975: 188). In fact, the scenery would inspire some of the stones in the self-portrait *The Great Masturbator* (1929). He situated the bandits against the Cape Creus backdrop. First, a sentry is seen scanning the horizon, and then he sees four Catholic bishops covered in obstructive liturgy, singing like a church choir atop a crag. Afterward, the guard descends with difficulty toward a fisherman's stall that is crowded with a troop of debilitated comrades. To prevent intrusion, the commander orders them to take up arms. On the path, one after another, they fall from exhaustion like the remaining residue from the time of the uprising.

The troop is then displaced by a group of politicians, militia, and clergyman who disembark with their delegates to officiate a solemn ceremony. They are denominated *mallorquines*, a word that in Cadaqués among Dalí's family was synonymous with "smuggler," in reference to all those who had unloaded their contraband from the island of Mallorca.

Before proceeding, the retinue marches in front of the four bishops, who are then reduced to just their skeletons, in what at that time was perceived by attentive spectators as a visual paraphrase of a famous picture. It deals with *Finis Gloriae Mundi* by seventeenth-century Sevillan painter Juan Valdés Leal; in the Residencia de Estudiantes in Madrid where Buñuel and Dalí met they used to jokingly refer to it as *El obispo podrido* (The Rotten Bishop). Illustrated to perfection was the concept of *putrefacto* that came to hold the same significance in Spanish as that which Marinetti called *pasadista*, and became used to designate all that was reactionary and outdated.

The authority figures' retinue prepares to found Imperial Rome on top of the bishops' relics. The city is presented through documentary clip inserts that show the Vatican, the grind of contemporary life, and a multitudinous religious congregation at the Coliseum. The images attempt to evoke one of the gags that Buñuel had in mind, a Vatican Olympic Games where hundreds of priests race in holy mass and other liturgies that had been adapted to modern-day sports.

The ceremony is then interrupted by lascivious screams from a woman (Lya Lys) who is rolling around in the mud with a man (Gaston Modot). The scene is presented with scatological elements; its excrement-like features inevitably associates it with the mortar of the foundational stone. While Modot caresses a handful of mud, the audience sees the heroine seated on the lavatory. Then a documentary clip of volcanic lava is inserted over which the sound of a toilet flushing can be heard. All of the details can be found in Dalí's texts that were written contemporaneously, including "L'Âne pourri," published in July 1930 in *Le Surréalisme au Service de la Revolution*, where he takes into consideration that beyond "shit, blood and purification" there is a "world of treasures" and "the wake of the golden ages larks behind the ignominious scatological simulacra." Only through abolishing "infamous and abominable ideals of all genres including aesthetics, humanitarian, and philosophy," would it then be possible to access "the clear source of masturbation, exhibitionism, crime and love." Furthermore, to cast all doubt aside, he adds in the book *La femme visible* (The Visible Woman, 1930): "One loves wholeheartedly when one is capable of eating the beloved woman's shit" (Abadie, 1979: 170).

The film deals with daring expressions and phrases that make the audience uncomfortable. However, it is worth remembering that shortly thereafter, W.B. Yeats would write the poem "Crazy Jane Talks with the Bishop," included in *Words for Music Perhaps* (1932), where one can read the following verses:

> But love has pitched his mansion in
> The place of excrement.
> (Yeats, 1989: 375)

Buñuel and Dalí were surprised to learn that, after some time, they had been picked up by Juan Ramón Jiménez, to whom in February 1929 they had written a letter in which they told him to literally go to shit, comparing the protagonist donkey of his book *Platero y yo* with the rotten donkeys from *Un chien andalou*.

Because the poet would write in his book *Espacio* (1954, in the definitive version): "Love, love, love (Yeats sang) <<love instead of excrement>> (Jiménez, 2005: 1270).

Returning to the development of *L'Âge d'or*, in order to prevent the foundational act from being thwarted, two police officers take the men and a few nuns to the woman. The film's protagonists spend the rest of the time attempting to find each other and defeating obstacles that society places in front of them. In this manner, the central theme is established: the repression of desire as the base of Judeo-Christian civilization faced with *amour fou* that implies rebellion against the dominant order.

While the two police officers escort the man (Modot), he stumbles upon a series of advertising posters. However, he neglects to see in them what they offer him, which obstinately transforms them into the beloved woman. Inclusively, they reconstruct her body using a series of fragments taken from a poster stuck to fence (which his imagination livens up with masturbation movements), a sandwich-man (which he sees as her legs), and from a photograph in a bookstore's shop window (where he obtains the image of the woman's face).

The laborious reconstruction culminates in the figure of Lya Lys, who is leaning back in erotic ecstasy, with a bandaged finger, in a way that alludes to the masturbatory movements that Modot evoked earlier. Her mother highlights it even further when she alludes to the bandage in her questions to Lya Lys in the spoken dialogue. Meanwhile, the father carries on in the medicine cabinet, agitating a little bottle with movements like those of the woman's finger. Precisely, these reiterations produced through visual rhymes redirect the characters' subliminal flows and weave together a circuit of drives. Actual channels determine the direction of the sequences rather than conventional narratives or classic spatiotemporal continuities (Figure 7.1).



Figure 7.1 *L'Âge d'or*. Vicomte de Noailles.

The protagonist enters into her room and finds a cow lying on the bed. Once the animal is expelled its cowbell continues to be heard off screen. Meanwhile, Lya Lys is seated at the dressing table facing the mirror, drawing attention to a visual composition similar to the works of Magritte. In a particularly creative use of the interaction between sound and image, the lovers, who are far apart, converge in the same mental space, marking desire's point of encounter through the shared imaginary, "the noisiness of thoughts," in the words of the Spanish Baroque writer Baltasar Gracián, whose works Buñuel greatly appreciated.

The sound of the cowbell that can be heard from the bedroom joins with the sound of barking dogs that are heard on the street where the man is being escorted by the police. The couple communicates with each other through the use of the mirror and the blowing of the wind, through connected emphatic movements: when he bites his lips, she mimics the same gesture while seated at the dressing table. Furthermore, continuing with the visual leitmotif of masturbatory agitation that Modot imagines seeing in the street advertisement, Lya Lys makes similar motions with her *polissoir* or nail file. At this point, they succeed in placing themselves above physical distances and social barriers (Sánchez Vidal, 1993: 74–76).

In order to reunite with the beloved woman, the man shows the police his Masonic Diploma from the Ministry of the Interior, accrediting him as the delegate for a goodwill society. Moments after his release, he takes a taxi, but not without first kicking a blind man (the script specifies that his condition be explicit to war mutilation). Then he arrives at the celebratory reception at the house of the Marquis of X, the woman's parents.

The different takes of the party – seemingly casual, *en pasant*, without any emphasis – could not be more shocking. One of them depicts two guests arriving in an automobile where a monstrance displays the holy host (in order to remove any doubt about the object, one hears the sound of a church bell that is rung during consecration). In another take inside the mansion, the dignified Marquis of X animatedly converses with his guests while flies are stuck to his face. Meanwhile, farmers on board a rustic horse-drawn carriage, drinking wine straight from the bottle, parade through the middle of the living room. A female servant surrounded by flames comes out of the kitchen. In the garden, the forester repeatedly shoots his adolescent son for the trivial act of swiping his hand while rolling a cigarette.

All of these scenes create a silent unease, set to the rhythm of the repeating visual leitmotif of masturbatory movements initiated earlier, and prolonged by the way that Lya Lys compulsively rubs the ring that she makes come on and off her finger, as well as the waiter's movement while cleaning a wine bottle. Finally, the tension is vented when Modot's character slaps the woman's mother because she has spilled wine on him.

The act merits his expulsion from the party and causes his clandestine return to his beloved in the garden. The garden sequence is largely inspired by the Ernst Lubitsch film *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1925). Through these scenes, the Buñuelesque theme of frustrated desire – the same as in *Un chien andalou* – forms the intimate

nucleus of *L'Âge d'or*. A series of obstacles stands in the way of the lovers. To a large extent, they are of an intimate and internal nature, as visualized by the *maristas* who appear in the protagonist's mind, crossing the bridge, and who translate an early poem written by the director, "The rainbow and the cataplasm," where he questions, much in line with Benjamin Péret, how many *maristas* fit on a runway? Four or five? (Buñuel, 1982: 137).

Fortunate metaphors such as the Ministry of Internal Affairs preside over subconscious domains and received education. This is alluded to in one of the preview titles of *Un chien andalou* that was initially called *Es peligroso asomarse al interior* (It's Dangerous to Look Inside), inverting the written advertisements on the train windows so as not to allow one to see or lean out of the window, and would continue into *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* (The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie, 1972). The two heads of police would also appear in *La Fantôme de la liberté* (The Phantom of Liberty, 1974), ordering the final charge against the protestors: "Long live the chains!" – the same cries that patriotic Spaniards hurled during the Independence War, exalting absolutism as an attack against the constitutional regime imposed by Napoleon. It is often translated in French as "À bas la liberté!" (Down with Freedom), similar to the title *Down with the Constitution!*, one of the previous titles before *L'Âge d'or*.

During the garden scene, the Minister telephones and interrupts the love scene in order to reproach Modot for abandoning his goodwill duties, provoking a humanitarian catastrophe. At first, Buñuel thought of illustrating the disaster through showing a large pile of shoes of massacred children. However, in the end he substituted that idea with another clip, a fragment from the fictional film *The White Sister* (Henry King, 1923).

The most striking part of the love scene is the use of the voice "in off" that occurs. The lovers speak without moving their lips and use words that would correspond to the intimacy of the bedroom. Furthermore, they express happiness at having killed their children, lengthening the filicide committed by the forester. In a curiously coincidental way, Alfred Hitchcock would employ similar sound techniques in the contemporaneous *Murder* (1930). In Hitchcock's piece, it would be much closer to theatrical monologue – used to express the protagonist's internal thoughts. Also in both films, the same musical accompaniment – Wagner's prelude to the death of *Tristán e Isolda* – would be used.

There is a strong oral pulse throughout the scene, not only because of the simulated "fellatio" that Lya Lys performs on the statue's big toe when Modot abandons her to answer the call from the Minister of the Interior, but in the authentic and amorous cannibalism that makes them bite each other's fingers rather than exchange kisses. If, cinematographically, it refers to a scene from Eric Von Stroheim's *Greed* (1924), in everything else it shares the behavior of the praying mantis (the program for *L'Âge d'or* includes a drawing of one of these insects by Max Ernst). Dalí would not delay in writing the long poem *Je mange Gala* (I eat Gala), following his motto "Beauty will be edible or will not be," amending the

poem by André Breton at the end of his book *Nadja* (1928): "Beauty will be compulsive or will not be" (Breton, 1979: 119).

The irruption on the scene of the old orchestra conductor kissing Lya Lys perplexes Modot, who gets hit on the head with a hanging pot and enters into a state of strong convulsion, rendered by a drum roll sound reminiscent of Buñuel's birthplace Calanda, during Semana Santa, used to conjure the death of Christ. In the technical script (*découpage*) the image of the bishops' carrions were to be superimposed with the scene of the conductor kissing the girl. This approach made more explicit the link between the repression that was established by the act of founding Rome, the bishop thrown out of the window, and the final Christ.

Being prey to a great amount of agitation, Modot bursts into the woman's room and begins to throw everything he finds out the window: a plow, a pine tree in flames, a bishop and his walking stick, a giraffe – an animal that is often represented in the iconography of both Dalí and Buñuel, who wrote the text titled, "Une Girafe" that appeared on May 15, 1933 in number 6 of *Le Surréalisme au Service de la Revolution* (Surrealism in the Service of the Revolution) and served to support the surrealist object that he made with Alberto Giacometti to be installed during a party in the garden of the Viscount's villa in Hyères. The profile of a piece of plywood was used to imitate the natural size of a giraffe. The giraffe spots were made with hinges that allowed them to be lifted them up so that one could read the phrases written underneath, the majority of which described scenes or images, such as one of Christ bursting out in laughter that was recuperated in *Nazarín* (1959).

The last thing that he throws out is the pillow feathers, which fall imperceptibly onto snow that is covering the outskirts of Selliny Castle, according to Sade's *Les 120 Journées de Sodome* (The 120 Days of Sodom). It is worth noting that Marie-Laure de Noailles was the direct descendant of the Marquis de Sade on her maternal side and that the viscounts had in their possession since 1929 the manuscript of the mentioned work that was written in 1785 on a long roll of paper that measured 10 meters in length.

A title heading reveals what occurs in this new scene, indicating that in this precise instant, but yet very far from it (since the mansion of the Marquis of X is supposed to be in Rome), the four survivors of the most bestial of orgies celebrated in the confines of Selliny leave the castle to return to Paris. Originally, these libertine criminals were going to be Jesus, Confucius, Muhammad, and Luther (Figure 7.2). However, finally, Buñuel opted to assimilate the main protagonist, the Duke of Blangis, with Christ, avoiding the other three equivalents. To establish the rocky setting, there is certain symmetry with the bandits in the beginning of the film. In fact, they are no less exhausted. A lame and weak character also appears. A cross adorned with locks of hair is placed beneath the snow and serves as the backdrop to the word END; meanwhile the sound of a double-step is heard.



Figure 7.2 *L'Âge d'or*. Vicomte de Noailles.

Themes and Techniques

L'Âge d'or maintains considerable ties with *Un chien andalou*, dealing with the new fight for desire against the obstacles that are interposed by reality. From these assumptions, the nucleus of the film occurs in the garden sequence, and the rest of the film could be considered its prosthesis, a parenthesis that is added to the epicenter in order to enrich it, and in passing, that amplifies the individual and adolescent radiography in *Un chien andalou* toward a social and adult dimension. From there come the external barriers between the two lovers: convention, manners, formal behavior. This is the cornerstone that had caused such unease among its detractors.

The film is not only about a protagonist who slaps a woman, a father who shoots his son for a trivial act, lovers who celebrate murdering their children, or a goodwill delegate who kicks a blind man. Nothing is in its habitual place, but it maintains an aesthetics that is apparently realist in order to make its requests more effective and direct, as one of the direction assistants noted (Heymann, 1981: 6–11).

In any case, the enunciative apparatus also conscientiously moves away from the conventions of avant-garde cinema through techniques such as filming through lenses or filters that distort the image or produce *flous*, superimposition, and montage in search of multiple images, the unrealistic illumination, the stylized sets, and the forced positions of the camera, with unusual framing and angulations.

Its development does not occur along a foreseeable narrative, nor does it exhaust the vicissitude of characters that often appear in episodic fashion. In this aspect,

the structure reminds one of *Le Fantôme de la liberté*, even though the difference in this film is conserved in the conducting thread of the "protagonist" couple who abstract, make parody, and subvert classic roles.

Disruptive elements such as the *collage* and its resulting estrangement facilitate the alteration of these conventions. Some set out to do so within the frame: the bishops on the islet, the cow on the bed, the monstrance in the car, the plow, or the giraffe in the protagonist's bedroom. Others are established through the collision of planes that lack continuity with spatiotemporal ruptures, jump cuts, and the insertion of material from documentary and fictional works. In addition, it is not unusual that the captions and sound, instead of completing their complementary and orienting function, even despite the still precarious technology of sound, contribute more to the confusion (Murcia, 1994: 42–56).

The surrealist technique of *collage*, already well in place in painting and literature, separates what is habitually united, while it unites what is habitually separate. In this way, following Marx's proposal it allows the unusual to become quotidian and the quotidian to become unusual so that – as Engels emphasized and Buñuel enjoyed repeating – to put into doubt the bourgeois order and to question whether we are living in the best of possible worlds.

To that the ellipsis must also be added that displacements and all types of dissociative elements of conventional continuity are deliberately fragmented in order to allow constitutive elements to derive an associative logic that is mediated by subconscious pulses instead of instilled and learned rationality. A good example is the recomposition and condensation of the image of the beloved woman that Modot creates through heterogeneous fragments that he stumbles upon on the street in the form of posters and advertisements while he is being escorted by the police. This rejection of publicity, of its intermediary role – and the refusal to accept the libido's diversion toward consumerism – is one of the most modern aspects of the film. To a large extent, it recalls earlier procedures such as the objects with symbolic function and the paranoia-critical method that Dalí used to associate distinct realities and also crystalized in obsessive images. The artist considered desire to be the active agent that allowed the exterior world to be reorganized and measured by its own delirium.

Others types of distancing proceeds from the set design and props. The group that abandons the Selliny Castle, with Christ in front, appears in a scene that is evidently made of cardboard stones that are just as false and conventional as Jesus' removable beard, and furthermore, he appears visually associated with chains (from the raised bridge). In order to retain the symmetry between the bandits and the scorpions from the beginning of the film, his gestures become like those of the praying mantis. Beneath his praying appearance hides the perverse Duke of Blangis, who is inclined to sexual and bloody orgies. It is enough to confront Jesus with his most incarnate enemy, the Marquis de Sade, in order for instinct to flourish beneath social liturgies and take off its masks and beards. In this way, the final meeting with Sade ends with a resounding echo from the beginning of Fabre, establishing a parenthesis where

these two great champions of instinct fight for liberty and the harmony with Nature that characterized the myth of the Golden Age.

Likewise, one remembers Cervantes' words in chapter XI of the first part of *Don Quijote de la Mancha* (1605), where he returns to one of the most famous passages of the novel, "Discourse on the Golden Age." This oratorio piece is literally cited in one of the versions from *Ilegible, hijo de flauta* (The Illegible Son of the Flute), a script written in 1947 that resulted from a collaboration between Luis Buñuel and Juan Larrea that the filmmaker tried to take to the big screen on three separate occasions at least.

However, this is not the only context that explains the title of the film. Within the semantic fields that concerned Surrealism and psychoanalysis, the group of bandits possessed something of the primal horde that Freud had proposed in 1912 in his book *Totem and Taboo* (cited in Hammond, 1997:15); meanwhile, he refers to the concept of the Golden Age in his 1927 *The Future of an Illusion* (Ipar, 1998). The Freudian influence is far from minor in relation to Buñuel's works. In *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (1901), he extensively analyzes gestures such as that of slipping a ring on and off a finger, just as Lya Lys does while she waits for Modot during the party sequence (Freud, 1973: 884). To that he would add the theories of Otto Rank about fetal life as the origin of the mythology of paradise lost, which Dalí would reinstate. This led to the dedication of the second chapter of *Vida secreta* (Secret Life) in his "Interuterine Memories," explicitly following the model proposed by Rank in his book, *The Trauma of Birth* (1925).

To these Cervantian and psychoanalytic connotations, Charles Chaplin's film *The Gold Rush* (1925) could also be added. There is no arbitrary supposition based on the mere play on words: the film is mentioned in Buñuel's *découpage*, concretely, in the passage that describes the inaugurators' descent through the narrow pass of Cape Creus. In all likelihood, the referential sequence refers to the beginning of the Chaplin film where one sees exhausted miners climbing a mountain pass, and one of them collapses face down on the ground, just as occurs with the bandits in *L'Âge d'or*.

In fact, when MGM invited Buñuel to Hollywood in 1930, amidst the explosive scandals that the film caused in Paris, Buñuel sent a photo of himself with Charles Hale, the protagonist from *The Gold Rush*, to Charles de Noailles. There is documented consistency about the jokes surrounding the project where Chaplin would play Christ, through an offshoot with the title "Noticiario" that Buñuel had published on December 15, 1927 in *La gaceta literaria*. Buñuel could not stop thinking about the image of Christ laughing or with different hair accessories, as he would represent in the films *Nazarín* and *La Voie lactée* (The Milky Way, 1968). Differently from the Surrealists, who normally cited Chaplin with respect (such as in the manifesto that shows support for *The Golden Age* and *Hands off Love*), Buñuel and Dalí scorned Chaplin for his sentimentalism, preferring instead Buster Keaton.

Above all else, the main doctrinal influence for the film is that of the Marquis de Sade, not only at the end when he is explicitly cited, but also in the scene where Modot kicks the blind man. The scene was not originally in the technical script that Buñuel had typed. Certainly, it was a suggestion made by Dalí, the co-scriptwriter, due to the similarity between it and a passage from chapter 11 of *Vida secreta*, situated during the time period of *L'Âge d'or*. According to Dalí, one day while in Paris he saw a blind man without legs sitting in a wheelchair which he rolled with the force of his hands. Bothered by the way that the blind man tapped passersby so that someone would help him cross the street, the artist would approach him and give him a kick, which would instantly send him to the other side of the street. Buñuel would resurrect that scene in *Los olvidados* (The Forgotten Ones, aka The Young and the Damned, 1950), but he would create two characters from the blind man without legs: the blind man Don Carmelo and the mutilated man who moved around in a carton with wheels.

No less sadistic is the episode in which the forester shoots his son, with the addition of a very Daliesque line: "William Tell complex," symmetrical to that of Oedipus: the father who wants to kill his son. The artist represents it in a number of his paintings after confronting his terrible progenitor. In the case of *L'Âge d'or*, it was most likely inspired by an actual event, the so-called "Miramón crime," which occurred in May 1928 in the province of Tarragon, when a neighbor using a gun and an ax killed eight children and a woman. Dalí enthusiastically glossed it in various texts due to the gratuitous violence of the act.

Sade is also at the heart of one of the most radical shots of the film. Toward the end, Modot, surrounded by the sound of drums, leaves the garden and irrupts into Lya Lys's bedroom. The objective of the camera is in direct line with his unbuttoned fly, and advances until it *enters* into the apparatus. A fade to black indicates that the man has passed through it. In the following plane, the spectator sees his back as he approaches the woman's bed after the film has been adapted to take on the point of view of his sex, which produces a fierce rebellion and causes him to throw everything that he encounters off the balcony. The culmination is found in *Les 120 journées de Sodome* (1785), which through unmasking converts Christ into the Duke of Blangis.

Thirty years later, in *Viridiana*, Buñuel would employ a similar procedure to conclude his misadventures of virtue, settled by another scandal comparable to *L'Âge d'or*. During the scenes with the mendicants, Enedina, one of the beggars, asks her companions to pose for a photo that she is going to take. Positioning herself in front of them, she "takes the photo" by lifting up her skirt, once again converting the camera objective into sex (feminine in this case). The photograph obtained from the congelation of images becomes a parody of Leonardo da Vinci's *Last Supper* where the figure of Christ is embodied by a drunk, blind, and lustful beggar.

Ultimately, *L'Âge d'or* obliges one to pose the question: apart from *Un chien andalou*, was there another surrealist cinema? It was the last short film that was conceived, filmed, and produced before both of its creators formed part of Breton's

group. In addition, since *L'Âge d'or* was conceived in the midst of the surrealist movement, celebrated by Breton, and was sustained by its specific manifesto, the result of the film contributed to the distancing between Buñuel and Dalí in relation to Bretonian orthodoxy. When they deserted it in 1932, they were not abandoning a consolidated cinematographic surrealist practice but, rather, they were testing transitory surrealist practices.

Another question concerns the influence that the film had on posterity besides the long parenthesis that it maintained in outside circuits due to its prohibition. Jean-Luc Godard projected it along with *Battleship Potemkin* (1925) as a supreme example of political cinema. He justified this based on the change of forms through which it was based. The root of these behaviors and forms make them easily modifiable. However, altering the forms of behavior is much more arduous; it takes millennia, as with the manner of proceeding to inauguration in celebration or ennoblement of the presence of powerful public figures. True change would break out from the mutation of these social rites (Godard, 1980: 217–218).

However, the irradiation of *L'Âge d'or* does not get exhausted in experimental or avant-garde cinema. It is difficult to forget its beginning, with its scorpions and bandits, when, at the start of Sam Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch* (1969), a group of outlaws hold up a bank – where an ambush of bounty hunters await them – and then cuts to two children setting scorpions on ants.

One would have to ask if *L'Âge d'or*, like *Un chien andalou* and surrealist cinema in general, was not the product of a highly volatile and unstable product that was only made possible due to the transient conjunction of two personalities as unrepeatable as Buñuel and Dalí. Perhaps it was their open character that allowed them to formulate an aesthetic and cinematic proposal that had such a wide and expansive reach.

Translated by Ana Paulina Lee

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8

Buñuel Entomographer

From *Las Hurdes* to *Robinson Crusoe*

Tom Conley

In some of his early reflections on the nature of cinema that seem to have fallen in the shadow of the formative theories of cinema in the twentieth century, Luis Buñuel is prescient about the meaning of film editing or *découpage*. To be sure, Epstein and Delluc were theorizing the medium in terms that Gilles Deleuze and Jacques Rancière have revived of late, but Buñuel's synchronous reflections on the virtues of the medium seem to have passed under a good deal of critical radar. In an essay written in 1927, at the time he was composing *Un chien andalou* (An Andalusian Dog, 1929), prior to his collaboration with Salvador Dalí, Buñuel noted that a good film must be crafted from a careful selection and arrangement of shots. Writing from Paris, informing his Iberian readers that Spanish had no easy equivalent for *découpage*, he appealed to paraphrase, calling the process a "simultaneous separation and ordering of visual fragments." For Buñuel, two or more successive shots were at once independent of one another, autonomous, yet connected in some way or other. Continuity could only be a relation of contiguity. Or, perhaps, in order to obtain maximum force of expression, cinematic composition would be an art of juxtaposition, what in poetry Maurice Blanchot, reflecting on René Char, has called a *parole de fragment*, a speech of fragments that causes readers to lose their geographical bearings. Words – or, in the context of Buñuel's cinema, orderings of shots – gain force when they are

> isolated and dissociated to the point where it is impossible for us to go from the one to the other without a leap, and while we are aware of a difficult interval, in their plurality they nonetheless carry the sense of an arrangement of a new sort, that will not be that of a harmony, of a concord or of a conciliation, but that will accept disjunction or diverge as the infinite centre from which, through the words themselves, a relation must be established: an arrangement that does not compose, but that juxtaposes. (Blanchot, 1973: 452–453)

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When they are grafted onto Buñuel's writing, Blanchot's impressions of René Char's *parole en archipel* give shape and contour to the filmmaker's further thoughts on editing. Buñuel writes:

> The intuition of the film, the photogenic embryo, forever palpitates in this operation called *découpage*. Segmentation. Creation. Excision of one thing to be converted into another. What was not before now is. Style. The simplest, the most complicated ways of reproducing, of creating. From the amoeba to the symphony. The authentic moment in a film, creation through segmentation. In order to be recreated through cinema this landscape will have to be segmented into 50, 100, and even more fragments. They will all move in succession in a vermicular way, ordering themselves into a colony to compose the whole of the film, a great tapeworm of silence, composed of material segments (*montage*) and of ideal segments (*découpage*). Sementation of segmentation
>
> Film—mass of shots
> Shot—mass of images.
>
> An isolated image represents very little. A Simple monad, not yet organized, in which, at the same time, an evolution takes place and is continuous. A direct transcription of the world: a cinematic larva. The image is an active element, a cell of invisible action, but secure, in view of the shot that is the creative element, the individual likely to specify the colony …[1]

In their poetic drift the words themselves constitute a *parole de fragment* in which the utterance itself, setting one image next to another, juxtaposes the raw material of film to a primitive form of life. A shot might be an amoeba and a film, in its evolution from a single cell to a composite form, an *echinococcus* or tapeworm. A shot might also be a swarm of insects, bees perhaps, which become part of a film when the mass, "in a vermicular way," forms the colony that is the greater film. The shot is a single cell or a single insect, an organic and self-reproducing form, whose traits bear the mark of the colony when the collectivity has "vermiculated," that is, when vermicules (or worms, original or originary forms of vermin) have swarmed together in a massive tangle that preys on the surface to which they are attached. At the same time the individual shot contains or is itself a volley of dispersed "images" felt to be comparable to a scatter of insects.

Buñuel locates the event of the evolution from the shot to the film in a landscape in the segmentations of fragments that multiply (like vermin) in fifties or hundreds. The discourse, making little distinction between the individual unit and its milieu, suggests that the one and the other are either the same or are in primitive symbiosis. A chosen form (an image), when it multiplies or aggregates into a mass or colony, melds with or even becomes the very landscape that gives life to it. It is difficult not to see the cinematographer looking at the world through the lens of the entomologist. In doing so he constitutes an implicit geography of cinema in which details, fragments, or shards, when seen without any connection or relation

with respect to one another, are the elements of a topography, whereas, by contrast, their mass (or "film" as a whole) is a geography. The drift of Buñuel's words suggests that the difference between a shot and a film is a variant on the celebrated distinction from which Claudius Ptolemy built his *Geography*. In order to define the title of his work the Alexandrian geographer needed to make its aims and goals a function of topography (or, in his idiolect, chorography):

> Geography is a representation in picture of the whole known world together with the phenomena which are contained therein. It differs from Chorography in that Chorography, selecting certain places form the whole, treats more fully the particulars each by themselves – even dealing with the smallest conceivable localities, such as harbours, farms, villages, river courses, and such like. … The end of Chorography is to deal separately with a part of the whole, as if one were to paint only the eye or the ear by itself. The task of Geography is to survey the whole in its just proportions, as one would the entire head. (1991: 25)

The cinephile following Buñuel's life and films would suspect that in his formative years, when he was at the Residencia de Estudiantes in Madrid in the mid-1920s, the future director would have known the surreal gloss that Pieter Apian, cosmographer to Charles V, brought to Ptolemy's inaugural words. In his *Cosmographia*, that witnessed Spanish editions when Apian (born near Leipzig) became a knight of the Holy Roman Empire and court mathematician, his work became household knowledge in intellectual circles; there is reason to believe that the author and his manual would have figured in study of the history of geography and, further, in its relation with the visual arts in the late medieval and early modern wings of the Prado.[2] In Apian's illustrative gloss Ptolemy's observations are made so literal that two sentient organs of the human body, when they are compared to a city-view (that is set in parallel with a portrait in profile of a Christ-like figure), attest both to segmentation and to a precocious staging of a long shot, medium view, and extreme close-up (Figure 8.1). It might be said that the isolated eye and ear are cells "of invisible action." That a totality *cannot* be configured or even imagined from the close views of the eye and the ear, and that the organs are of a proportion which stretches the perspective of vision to include detailed study of the smallest and largest things at once attest to a condition in which topography expressly aims at making *no connection* with the abstract configuration of the cosmographer's or geographer's world.

Buñuel's early cinema appears driven by the "perspectivism" (a term that Nietzsche is said to have coined) obtained when antithetical geographical entities – amoebas and symphonies as it were – are juxtaposed. As a result a strong geographical inflection accompanies Buñuel's entomology. It is especially pronounced in his surrealist phase, where narrative derives from breathtaking spatial contrasts, and where the biologist is tantamount to a topographer. An emblematic figure is found in *Un chien andalou*, in which Pierre Batcheff, seen in a medium shot, inquisitively

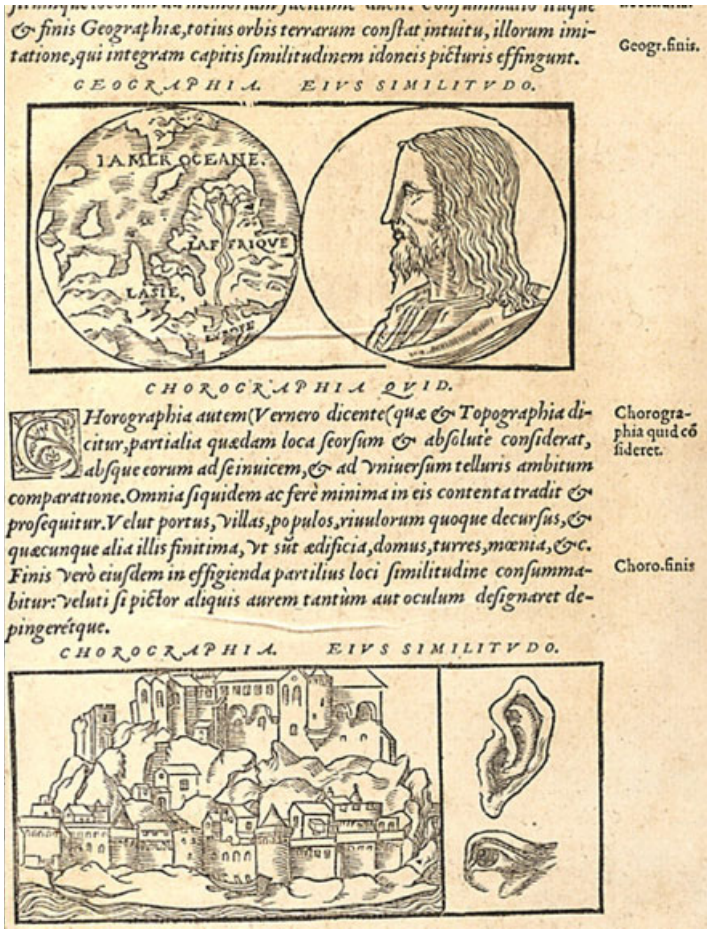

& finis Geographiæ, totius orbis terrarum conſtat intuitu, illorum imitatione, qui integram capitis ſimilitudinem idoneis picturis effingunt.
Geogr. finis.
GEOGRAPHIA. EIVS SIMILITVDO.
LA MER OCEANE.
LAPPAIQVE
LASIE.
CHOROGRAPHIA QVID.
Horographia autem (Vernero dicente) quæ & Topographia dicitur, partialia quædam loca ſeorſum & abſolutè conſiderat, alſque eorum ad ſe inuicem, & ad vniuerſum telluris ambitum comparatione. Omnia ſiquidem ac ferè minima in eis contenta tradit & proſequitur. Velut portus, villas, populos, riuulorum quoque decurſus, & quæcunque alia illis finitima, vt ſint ædificia, domus, turres, mœnia, &c.
Chorographia quid cõ ſideret.
Finis verò eiuſdem in effigienda partilius loci ſimilitudine conſummabitur: veluti ſi pictor aliquis aurem tantùm aut oculum deſignaret depingeretque.
Choro. finis
CHOROGRAPHIA. EIVS SIMILITVDO.

Figure 8.1 Apian similitude. Peter Apian, *Cosmographia Petri Apiani*. Paris 1553, Typ 515.53.149, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

gazes at his hand. His deliberate stance and intense curiosity at what seems to be his sight of a swarm of ants crawling about a hole in his right hand (immediately seen in extreme close-up) are contrary to the shock that the juxtaposition would elicit. In studying the insects the protagonist makes clear the way that the "detail" engages at once a topography of the body (the hand lap-dissolves into a woman's hairy armpit, and the armpit into a sea urchin before an iris-shot displays a severed hand) in a variety of landscapes. The insects comprise the "mass of images" in the single shot at the same time as they give way to an oneiric geography of association. The sequence is almost didactic in encouraging the spectator to behold the film in the very way that actor Batcheff looks at his hand – all the while he becomes a rebus or a "catachresis" of a Spanish proverb about how a *hormigueo* is in his hands that are "falling asleep" for lack of circulation.

By all means *Las Hurdes*, aka *Tierra sin pan* (Land without Bread, 1933), completed four years after *Un chien andalou*, engages entomography with unmatched intensity, and no doubt in dialogue with freshly inherited strains of new modes of geographical inquiry. Based on Maurice Legendre's study of the region, whose very subtitle refers to Pierre Vidal de la Blache's foundational discipline that Jean Brunhes developed into what he called *géographie humaine*, the film calls into question the aims of any recuperative or redemptive "human science."[3] From the outset it does so with maps and insects. The front credits are set upon a shot of cumulous clouds that moves from right to left, indicating that the camera is recording them on a horizontal axis from a window or cockpit of an airplane.[4] Rather than indulging in an ichnographic view of a landscape below (or what would be under its purview), the shot flagrantly juxtaposes *writing* – the very letters of words of the title – to an ethereal or atmospheric ground on which it cannot be incised or printed. In the final cards that serve as transition from the title to the film (after a fade in and out of black), reference to tracking or tracing is marked in the words "The HURDANOS were unknown, even in Spain until a road was built for the first time in 1922. Nowhere does man need to wage a more desperate fight against the hostile forces of nature," which slowly dissolves, the background remaining that of the moving clouds, into "In light of this the film may be considered as a study of 'human Geography'" before the shot fades into black field out of which emerges a map of Europe.[5]

The film refuses to use aerial photography to take a condescending view of its subject. Were the camera aimed downward to locate the area, the prowess and progress of aviation would have been a keynote, and so also a perspective, lending authority to the viewer, that fixes in place what it sees. By contrast, and for the sake of a more supple play of perspective, the map provides a breadth of scale that cannot be realized through an aerial shot. From much further above the land than was the aircraft that had provided the point of view in the previous take, a map of western and eastern Europe displays five pinpointed sites, each in itself of a different geographical measure, about which are written their toponyms in French: from West to East, *Espagne*, *Savoie*, *Italie* (marked near the Dolomites), *Techoslovaquie*, and *Hongrie*, that the voice-over qualifies as "certain hidden and little-known parts of Europe … there exists remnants of the most primitive type of human life." Spain and Italy are momentarily implied to be those remnants. Up to this point the combination of the sight of the map and the sound of the first words spoken suggests that the places have been tacked onto a board much as would species of insects displayed on a wall (the very fashion that Buñuel later makes clear at the beginning of *Abismos de pasión*, aka *Cumbres Borrascosas* (Wuthering Heights, 1954), in which the inside of a Mexican villa is a collector's museum of butterflies and moths tacked onto receptive supports, ostensibly for comparative study). Already the title and map set forward a conjunction of things far and near in such a way that things macroscopic and microscopic are either quasi-identical or in intimate proximity.

Throughout the film a constantly shifting set of proportions, something of an ever-changing *scala leucorum* of the kind seen on early modern maps, requires spectators, like the protagonist of *Un chien andalou*, to wonder from where they are looking at the matter that is being filmed. In the sequences taken in *Las Hurdes* flies buzz everywhere about the images, sometimes drawing attention to the heat and odor of the place or else becoming a reference for scientific (or entomological) method of observation that the film would seem to embrace were it not for the ironic dissonance shown between the descriptive voice-over and the accumulation of images. Celebrated is, of course, the "mosquito" sequence begun by a river shown cutting through a lush landscape at its bank before the camera cuts to a view of a researcher (identified indirectly as a member of one of the medical units dedicated to controlling swamp fever), his feet bare (like many of the Hurdanos), walking along a riverbed while carrying a staff to which is attached a white porcelain dish that he is using to take water samples. An extreme close-up of water, implied to be lifted from a fairly swift flow of the current, is shown teeming with larvae. It is a literal embodiment of the shot as a "mass of images." The effect of its movement is enhanced when the film juxtaposes close-ups – and the camera is jittery, indicating either that it is hand-held or that the lens needed to record the image betrays instability – of two illustrations taken from a manual of entomology contrasting the ways that in their gestation the *culex* and *anopheles* mosquitoes rise to the surface of the water. The irony that "science" deals with its own mode of observation and nomination without regard to the effects of what it studies is patent and clear – but so also is the greater issue of proportion by which the insects, setting forward a relation of geography and topography, beg a broader question about how and where creatures seeing and shown may find themselves in a world without measure.

Three sequences, together set squarely in the middle of the film as if to serve as an axis and a vanishing point, make manifest Buñuel's art of "segmentation" or of abrupt and often violent contrast of landscapes and of objects of vastly different locales. First, and most famously, the voice-over tells of the only time that the Hurdanos can supplement their impoverished diets with meat. A series of shots depicts mountain goats in the rocky habitat of high cliffs on which they strut or hop from one crag to another. An uncharacteristic establishing shot in medium depth, taken with a telescopic lens, shows them moving down a promontory. In the corner of the image a gigantic speck of dust intrudes *as if it were a gigantic insect* or monstrous form rivaling the goats themselves.

Even with a pragmatic reading of the image, which would argue that the lens and the conditions of the shoot itself could not eliminate the speck of dust, the relation elsewhere established with "primitive" forms of life endows the sequence with an uncommon force of attraction. A speck of dust stuck on the lens is related to the specks of goats on the crest of the mountain. Hence in the shots that follow, one of which sets the goats in a vast perspective, and the other that records a contrived "fall" from a ledge, surprise and shock are a function of shifting

topographies. The sequence composed of nine shots of a duration of two or three seconds each, begins with a medium shot of two goats, seen through a telephoto lens, that make their way gingerly to a ledge beneath them. The second (or establishing), extremely long shot displays a very rugged mountainside whose escarpment falls almost vertically. Only upon careful viewing can the minuscule silhouettes of the beasts be seen in *contre-jour* on the ridge. The film cuts abruptly back to the goats, in medium depth, to regain the closer perspective of the first shot before, in the next, it reverts once again to the rugged and precipitous mountainside seen just seconds before. In a medium long shot, also in telephoto, the camera focuses on one goat on the top of the mountain's edge, then pans left to follow the animal as it saunters along and makes its way down the slope. Cutting to the goat descending along the same path, the camera pans and tilts down while holding the rugged perspective in view. The fleck of dust that had smudged the telephoto view of the goats on their ledges is visible again, now wiggling and dropping into the frame. At the same time a puff of smoke enters the frame from the right. In a long shot one of the goats that was perched on a ledge suddenly falls, just when the voice-off remarks that the Hurdanos eat meat only "when this happens." What is *this* that happens? Is it the remote chance that a goat loses its footing and falls to its death, or is it the result of the intervention of a hunter who bags his game?[6] An answer to the question is suggested in the following shot in which the carcass of the goat is shown in a countertilt, beginning in close-up and ending in a long shot in the distance, tumbling down the mountainside before the image fades out in black. The vertiginous perspective of the goat dropping earthward shifts brutally from the horizontal plane on which the "narrative" elements of the sequence are shown. No take in the film is staged with similar dramatic or gruesome panache. The fade-out in black that gives way to a bright, daylight view of a field of flowers behind six or seven box-like shapes at the bottom of the frame suggests that a passage of time has taken place (from day to night to day) without there having been any change for reason of the continuum of life-in-death that is the object of the narrative. The voice-over reveals that these are hives, "a chief source of industry," when the film cuts (in medium shot) to what appears to be a loose agglomeration – indeed a town or village – in which bees reside and, as it were, make their living.

The film cuts to another set of hives at whose bottom the animals are swarming. Three close-ups of the swarming bees follow before the film cuts back to the hives themselves. Two shots follow, one of the swarming bees, and another that repeats the aspect of the establishing shot of the previous sequence, before the film cuts to a long take of the landscape below the mountainside in the foreground. In the lower foreground one man, and then another, pull two mules on which hives are saddled. When the shot cuts to the rocky mountainside from below, making almost imperceptible the profile of the men pulling their beasts of burden, the nearly congruent view of only a minute before (albeit in not such extreme depth) of the two animals on the crest of the hillside suggests that the men and the mules

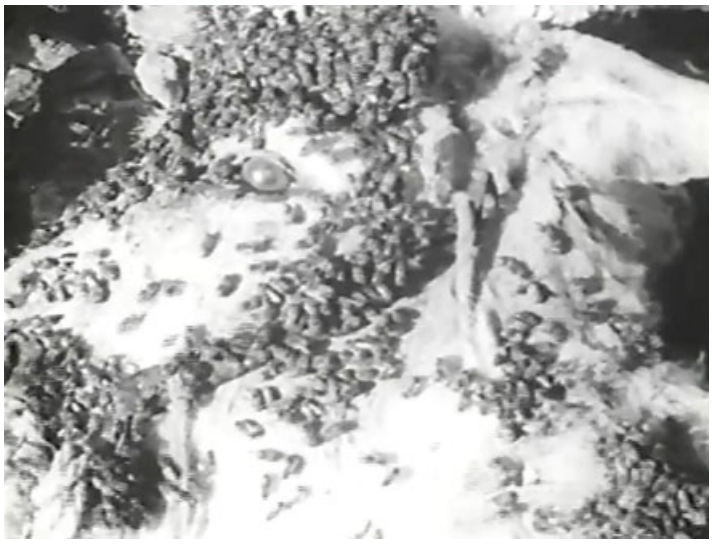


Figure 8.2 "Landscape" of bees and beast in *Las Hurdes*. Ramón Acín.

are now playing the role of the "scapegoats." And they do, but now in the thick of a swarm: the film cuts back to the first shot of the sequence before seven shots show one of the donkeys succumbing to what the voice-off reports to be "the hungry swarm" that attacks it after one hive, then the others, have fallen off its back. A final shot of the sequence displays the agglomeration on the carcass such that the bees and the beast can be construed as a landscape seen from above and afar (Figure 8.2). A vital geography becomes visible by virtue of the "vermiculation" that causes the swarm of "images" in the shot to acquire the intensity Buñuel associates with successful segmentation. When juxtaposed to one other, as are the images in these two sequences, a variegated architecture of shapes and patterns emerges from the film. Much like that of a beehive, the pattern is one in which geography and entomology inform the visual style.

Keeping in mind the principles of auteur theory of the 1960s by which Andrew Sarris ranked Buñuel among the greatest directors in the history of cinema, the viewer can wonder if the traits that mark the surreal cinema are drawn through the later – often ostensibly generic and both overtly and aggressively tawdry – cinema of the director's Mexican phase. Insects and vermin scurry through trash and dejection in *Los olvidados* – as they ought in a film that purports to be a slice of impoverished urban life in Mexico City. And, from stockyard to tenements, *El bruto* depicts worlds of such bestiality that amidst their rubbish humans themselves become vermin.[7] What, however, of an adaptation such as *Robinson Crusoe*, aka *The Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1953), shot in an exotic setting, featuring stage actor Dan Herlihy, for which Hugo Butler, a blacklisted screenwriter, collaborated with the Buñuel? It would appear that Defoe's story of self-reliance

and inventiveness that fuels the machinery of capital would be light-years from what Buñuel would put on screen.[8] The film treats as much of exotic flora and fauna as it does Defoe's self-reliant human mastery over nature. Now and again, amidst a variety of its perverse effects, the turns into a piece of entomography. The cameras turn about a book before it rises and takes a bird's eye of its cover and the continents of Africa and South America on either side. The front-credits, beginning with "Robinson Crusoe" set over the novel whose name it repeats, printed in gothic script, dissolve into and out of view while the camera fixes on the book and the map. The last credit is given to the director's name, also scripted in white gothic font, which dissolves into view and disappears when a triangular shadow is cast over the map and the book. When they become obscured, the narrator's voice-over, spoken in the name of Crusoe, intercedes to verify that what follows is limpidly clear and true. The narrative, following the novel closely, begins from the classical topos of the "shipwreck narrative," a tale attesting to the fate of sailors, in search of slaves, who have embarked in rickety vessels before succumbing to the violence of great storms at sea.[9] The relation of the front-credits to the voice-over that repeats the first sentences of the novel also implies that the construction is based on a mystical fable. The body whose head would be wearing a tri-cornered hat is no more than a shadow and a disincarnated voice telling of and bearing witness to a voyage beyond the known world and across the threshold of death. The voice tells of its extra-human encounters whose truth is found in the words congealed in the ink (and now fleeting in the moving images) before the interlocutor's or reader's eyes.[10] In appealing to a speaking shadow the film causes the voice of the narrator to be other than the one known to the novel's readers.

The narrative begins in the swirl of a hurricane. Crusoe, the sole survivor of the boat lost and sunk in a hurricane, swims ashore and discovers the strange aspect of the tropical island on which he is marooned. He walks about barefoot, hears what seems to be a panther rustling in the vegetation, takes refuge in the cleft of a high tree, falls asleep, and awakens as if into a dream. Taking a jackknife from his pocket, he ambles about before extracting an egg from a bird's nest, cracking it open, and discovering a premature chick that he encloses in the broken shell and returns to the nest.[11] He explores his new world and along the way suddenly glimpses the remains of his ship on a rocky peninsula far off in the distance. He swims to the craft, climbs aboard, and takes stock of what remains. The shot that stages Crusoe's entry into the wreckage begins as might any account of a shipwreck: a slight countertilt from medium close-up of an empty container (it avers to be a breadbox) reveals the hero in the background, gingerly making his way into the interior. Before he comes into view the shot focuses on rats that feed on the remains. In a less immediate way than in the surreal cinema the camera indicates that the world into which Crusoe enters is given to vermiculation. When shown juxtaposed to the vermin the hero is taken to be a human beast, as it were, that will "evolve" into a creature whose stealth and fortitude will afford it mastery over the plant and animal kingdom.

The narrative goes on to have Crusoe rehearse ways of living that on first sight bear resemblance to what the hurdanos had known in their isolated kingdom in rural Spain. His world, like theirs, is built from an intimate relation with primitive life. In a sequence that has little or nothing to do with Defoe's novel – all the while adhering to it as if at the foot of the letter – Crusoe recounts a leisurely promenade he makes one afternoon along a hillcrest that gives onto a magnificent view of a lagoon and a mountain landscape beyond. A fade-in from black opens onto a bright and lush setting which, in medium distance, the hero is crossing. Dressed in animal skins and fur (appropriate more for the Arctic than the tropics), a sack slung over his right shoulder, he clasps the sling of his flintlock rifle in his left hand while he holds in his right hand the arm of a elegant parasol fashioned from the hides of game. He has become a country gentleman taking a stroll about his property. At this moment the narrative appears to lay stress on how the hero has adapted himself to the milieu and how, too, hunter-gatherer that he is, he reproduces the sartorial delicacies of a world he had once known. He is a troglodyte in furry finery. The shot begins to pan left as soon as he speaks: "Had anyone a mean to have met such an odd creature as I was in my eighteenth year of solitude it must have either frightened them or caused a great deal of laughter."[12] Just as he notes how ridiculous his appearance must be, the pan comes to a stop. The bearded Crusoe, coiffed with a top hat of sewn pelts, has trudged to a spot where the lagoon and forest of the background are now visible. He remarks something odd on the earth to his right. He throws down his parasol, sets the rifle on the ground, and, facing the camera, immediately genuflects and (the sound track has him snicker) arches forward and looks into the edge of a sandpit to examine closely what he has just seen from afar. After a short pause (Crusoe pulls back, now, to look from a medium distance) the voice-over continues, confusing the past of the narrative and the present moment of the film. He laughs and then utters, "Ah ha, ah, my little friends," just as he extends him right arm to capture – or apprehend – what he has noticed. He scoops his hand into the sand, puts the contents into his left, and draws it near to take a closer view.

The film suddenly cuts to an extreme close-up of two minuscule beetles at the edges of two lifelines in the palm of his left hand. In voice-over Crusoe utters, as the bugs jump about, "hee, hee, I don't know what to call you, but you are my little friends, aren't you, eh, eh?" Cut to the end of the establishing shot in which, on his knees, Crusoe puts the beetles into the sand. An extreme close-up of the arena – it is a landscape and a stadium of sand – records the two insects burrowing into the ground and disappearing while Crusoe's voice remarks, "Ah, now you just wait in your homes, I'll feed you." Cut back to the establishing shot where Crusoe turns left, uttering (once more it is impossible to discern if the voice is *in* or *off*, in the narrative or in retrospective), "you're hungry, too, aren't you," just as he leans to the ground, himself now a hunter-gatherer, pouncing on a stray insect. A medium close-up registers Crusoe looking intently at what he has caught before the film cuts to an extreme close-up of an ant held between the thumb and index finger of

his left hand that reveals of grains of sand under his nails. "Yes, ah," states the voice-off, "here a mozzie floriate [flowery mosquito?]." Cut back to Crusoe examining the creature and then leaning forward, the next shot in extreme close-up taken of his finger dropping the bug next a conic cavity in the sand. The bug turns about and enters the cavity. "Ha! Go on, get him!" It is eventually pulled into the hole. In the setting of the establishing shot Crusoe gets back on his feet, stands and turns about and gathers his belonging, uttering, "Ah good bye, good bye," before he walks off. A straight cut to the next sequence, the discovery of Friday's footprint, begins with a medium close-up of a sandy beach whose upper edge (at the top of the frame) is washed with surf.

Within the classical style of editing the relation of the extreme close-up of the insects in the preceding sequence to the humans trekking and tracking on the beach could not be more obvious. Crusoe (and soon Friday) can only be inferred to be two species of insect. The pose that the hero has taken, squatting over the tiny arena he has discovered on the hillock, is that of the entomologist in the field. His gesture allows the camera to revive, in the lexicon of Nietzsche, the extreme perspectivism offered by the comparison of ordinary to minuscule things. Crusoe becomes a variant of Batcheff studying his antsy hand in *Un chien andalou*, and in *Las Hurdes* one of the urchins in a street who bends over to drink water from a gutter. In *Robinson Crusoe* the sandy landscape in which the bugs cannibalize one another recalls those which stand at the threshold of the inner country, *l'arrière-pays*, of the Hurdes, where play of proportion and form yields primal landscapes in things small and large or both immediate and remote.

By way of conclusion it can be said that the ever-shifting and often contrapuntal perspectives in Buñuel's articulation of space often operate through the presence of the insect in the landscape. Far from being fixed, perspective varies according to contrapuntal coordinates of points near and points far. Often in the films the close-ups or even the medium shots of telluric matter – rocks, stone walls, furrowed earth, riverbeds, even blades of grass – become abstractions that cause viewers to lose, soon to regain, and then lose again their cardinal bearings. Geography gives way to topography and vice versa from one shot to the next. In the early films – that is, the trilogy of *Un chien andalou*, *Las Hurdes*, and *L'Âge d'or* – in which narrative is far less present than in the later features, a mix of geography and entomology yields untold and unique perspectives on the world in which its panoplies of living creatures are forever at war. Certain traits of the signature that mark the feature films, as *Robinson Crusoe* makes clear, are based on those of the "early" phase where insects, seen belonging to a topography, unsettle the otherwise stable perspective in which the narrative is conveyed. The later films may not be so immediately or directly related to the early film theory that the trilogy espouses and exposes, but its practice is manifest, abundant, and of uncanny force and drive: such the work of the entomographer.

Notes

1 In Sánchez Vidal (1984: 172). I have used this article as a preface to work on *Un chien andalou* in Conley (2005: 202–203). Here the aim is to see how it informs Buñuel's cinematic geography.

2 Robert Karrow, Jr. (1993) notes that the 30 editions of Apian's *Cosmographia*, printed from 1528 up to the end of the century in Latin, Spanish, French, and Dutch, attest to the widespread importance of the manual in both the development of cartography and the dissemination and popularization of new forms of knowledge. I have tried to show how in chapter 2 of Conley (2011).

3 Brunhes (1910). The work builds from Pierre Vidal de la Blache's foundational geography and clearly informs Maurice Legendre (1927), the study that Buñuel consulted prior to his trip to the region he would call a "land without bread." Paula Amad (2010) shows how early French film theory found that the new medium championed a "microscopic" view of everyday life whereas the advent of aerial photography offered a synchronous counterpart, "the most extreme visualization of the archival dream of a world captured in a single gaze" (263).

4 A shot-by-shot description of the film is found in the appendix of Conley (1988).

5 Hubert Damisch (1972) argues that in classical painting clouds depict what cannot be represented. They are unshaped masses that call in question the surrounding world that is anchored in a logic of representation. By way of allegory (and Buñuel's many allusions to classical and Baroque painting within the film) it could be said that the title-shots are suggesting that *hurdanos* and their region of Spain cannot be reduced to the photographic chronicle.

6 The shot is well known for its mendacity, as noted, among others, by Peter Bloom (2008). Implied is that the camera might have been perpetually filming the hillside since time immemorial, or else might resemble contemporary art, an instance being Natalie Jeremijenko's recorded images of suicidal leaps from the Golden Gate Bridge, obtained by a mechanism, sensitive to things dropping, that sets the camera turning when an object begins to fall. Repeated viewings suggest that the crew put the goat onto the hillside and enacted a symbolic murder of the beast. In *Su realismo*, a play on words in the milieu (the "goatscape") and the effect of the animal as an "emissary goat" (*bouc émissaire* or "scapegoat") is set forward to show, as often is the case in *Un chien andalou*, how language circulates or even swarms in the images, and how the film elicits reflection on how an "accident" is related to a staging of a sacrifice.

7 Gilles Deleuze (1983) remarks that Stroheim, Buñuel, and Losey portray *originary worlds* in which animal instincts drive humans to murder (and even cannibalize) each other. The originary world resembles to a strong degree what the philosopher had called the "desert island."

8 As a great admirer of Buñuel notes, "[on]e could hardly imagine a more boring novel, and it is sad to see children still reading it today. Robinson's vision of the world resides exclusively in property; never have we seen an owner more ready to preach," and thus we see "the reconstitution of everyday life from a reserve of capital"; Deleuze (2004: 11).

9 C.R. Boxer (2001) accumulates such numerous accounts of shipwrecks that the reader discovers the development of a genre of "true fiction" that brought substantial remuneration for its authors.

10 Michel de Certeau furnishes a model of the mystical voyage in "Ethno-graphy," a study of a related work, Jean de Léry's *Histoire d'un voyage faict en la terre du Brésil* (1578 and 1580), in chapter 5 (1992). A cinematic variant of the mystical fable is found, he argues in *La Fable mystique: XVIe–XVIIe siècles* (1982: 48–50), in Marguerite Duras's *India-Song*.

11 The episode is rich for what concerns Buñuel's biology, but it also portends of the island that begins when it is born a second time, much in the way that in his reflection on the "deserted island" Gilles Deleuze compares the birth of the space to an egg. It also touches on the "beginning" of the human condition by way of the myth of the "bird's nest stealer" (*dénicheur d'oiseau*) with which Lévi-Strauss (1971: 505–520) constructs a vast and ever-mobile architecture. From this angle a reading of the film in the context of Buñuel's work could take an unforeseen and possibly rewarding direction.

12 The text of the novel is quite different. Fear of cannibals, not a delight in insects, occupies his reflections. "I knew I had been here now for almost eighteen years, and never saw the least Foot-steps of Humane Creature there before; and I might be here eighteen more, as entirely conceal'd as I was now, if I did not discover my self to them, which I had no manner of Occasion to do …" (Defoe, 1927: 192). Buñuel sets entomological fantasy and fieldwork in lieu of the place where Defoe's hero reflects on his primal fear of the cannibal.

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Part Three

The Forgotten One

9

The Complicit Eye

Directorial and Ocular Paradigms in Luis Buñuel's Mexican Films and Interdisciplinary Visuality (1940s and 1950s)

Erica Segre

Animal antiguo, que
se quedó muerto para encadenar
las ciencias.
Mira hacia arriba …
y no tiene nombre.
Le pondremos uno:
¡El horrendo ojosauro!

Frida Kahlo, undated entry, illustrated Diary (1940s–1950s)[1]

Terrains of the "Ojosauro"

The ocularcentricity of Luis Buñuel's perceptual gags, reflexive play, and iconoclastic disfigurations is well known in films that, from *Los olvidados* (The Forgotten Ones, aka The Young and the Damned, 1950) to *Ensayo de un crimen*, aka *La vida criminal de Archibaldo de la Cruz* (Rehearsal for a Crime, aka The Criminal Life of Archibaldo de la Cruz, 1955), reprise and intensify the scopic conceit of *Un chien andalou* (An Andalusian Dog, 1929), combining social and poetic subversion. If the ritual slicing of the eye in surely ironic close-up signals a necessary set of

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immolations – of the observational regimes of modernist and naturalist aesthetics (Harris, 2001: 98); the dominant perspective of artistic design and power and the monotheistic inquisitions of authoritarian discourse – the resultant "darkness" signals an initiation away from one-eyed opinion and carceral overlooking toward a directorial style that sought to visualize as if remembering away from site and situation "con los ojos cerrados y abiertos que usamos durante el sueño."[2] The film's own montage, predicated on the "stitching" of a celluloid skein of disparate objects, incongruous scenes, and polymorphic bodies, turned the celebrated intercutting of eye and moon of the opening sequence into a collaborative blurring in which art and poetry visualized together having cauterized the singularity of the monocular gaze. The meta-filmic play on segmentation implicated the technique of *découpage* – analyzed enthusiastically by Buñuel in *La gaceta literaria* of 1928 (White, 2000: 131–135) – along with the invisible slicing and splicing of celluloid: the unusual vertiginous speed of cutting in *Un chien andalou* accentuated viewer disorientation through the accelerated discontinuities of the frames and the director's parodic narrativity (Gale, 2007: 89).

The collaboration between Buñuel and Salvador Dalí set in motion a complicitous figural interrelation that resonated most vividly in the unhinging of social realism in literature, photography, and the visual arts in Mexico from the 1930s to the 1950s. The intermediality characteristic of the Spanish avant-garde and international Surrealism found a synoptic emblem in the disrobed and excised eye orbiting on and of itself like the detached, autonomous planet of Odilon Redon's hallucination.[3] The depiction of psychological spaces and uncharted phantasmal geographies of the inverted, inner eye of non-imitative art played on the revolutions of the diurnal and nocturnal perception made concrete in the revolving orb. In Mexico, the prominent screening of *Un chien andalou* and *L'Âge d'or* (The Golden Age, 1930) in the Palacio de Bellas Artes in 1938 (Alix and Sawin, 1999/2000: 199) was preceded by a poeticization of dislocated vision in literary magazines such as *Contemporáneos* (1929–1931), dedicated to aesthetic experimentation and intermedial dialogue and transference. León Felipe's translation of T.S. Eliot's "The Hollow Men" (1925), with its insistent ocular references, was published in the same issue in 1931 as Manuel Álvarez Bravo's enigmatic, seemingly subjectless close-up study of a faint shadow behind a curtain (the poem was followed by his portfolio of photographs in a deliberate interplay of ambiguous imagery).[4] The evocation of fallen vision acquires both a local and exilic poignancy in Felipe's Mexicanizing translation (Eliot's refrain's "mulberry bush" becomes a nopal cactus) that proved an evocative template for a disassociative aesthetic of the lens and representational art in the post-Revolutionary (and subsequently post-Republican) dystopia: "Esta es la tierra de los muertos / esta es la tierra del cactus. […] Los ojos no están aquí. / No hay ojos aquí / en este valle de estrellas moribundas / En este valle hueco / en esta quijada rota de nuestros reinos perdidos. […] / Ciegos, a menos que / los ojos reaparezcan / como la estrella perpetua […] la única esperanza / de los hombres huecos" (cited in Durán, 1973: 55–59).[5]

Through his collaborations with film photographers such as Gabriel Figueroa (1907–1997) and artist photographers such as Agustín Jiménez (1901–1974) and Manuel Álvarez Bravo (1902–2002), and abstract artists (with surrealist affiliation) such as scenographer Gunther Gerzso (1915–2000), Buñuel the émigré in the 1950s harvested the diffuse influence that his experimental films with their surrealist imprimatur had had on the imagery and composite aesthetics of the Mexican and European avant-garde leading up to the (belated) international exhibition of surrealist art of 1940 in the Mexican capital. Held in performance poet Inés Amor's Galería de Arte Mexicano, the controversial exhibition showcased the techniques associated with Surrealism's estranging, mutilating, and palimpsestic effects in image-making: frottage, fumage, grattage, and transfers. Such unconventional interventions on canvas and paper exploited rubbing, scraping, smoking, and pasting to register unrecognizable traces and imbue surfaces with the mysterious textures of an undisclosed contact. This dialogical event, which recognized the internationalism of surrealist art-making and its multiverse interlocutors in Mexico (notably Frida Kahlo, Álvarez Bravo, Agustín Lazo, Guillermo Meza, Antonio M. Ruíz), witnessed even the most unlikely figurative artists (identified with civic and even pedagogical projects) paying homage to a style marked by dismemberings, juxtaposition, oneiric distortion, and involuntary art objects (Andrade, 1989/1990). Arguably some of the Mexican artists that exhibited alongside transgressive works by Victor Brauner, Hans Bellmer, Dalí, De Chirico, Duchamp, and Man Ray embraced the opportunity to make their work "unhomely" and self-estranged in a milieu dominated by the polemics of cultural nationalism, even as they manifested their proficiency in a voguish countercultural style. The employment of surrealizing traits within a traditional illustrative technique, and the presence of outlandishly non-utilitarian objects, introduced a coded resistance to the prevailing orthodoxy regarding overtly nationalistic and socially descriptive representational media.[6] The highly politicized and patriotic Diego Rivera himself, while denouncing Stalinist persecution, megalomania, and dogma in a manifesto co-authored with André Breton (*¡Por un arte revolucionario independiente*! [For An Independent Revolutionary Art!], 1938), produced an eloquent image of deranged vertical and univocal power, with perhaps a passing allusion to Buñuel's infraction of the inquisitorial stare. His *Vasos comunicantes* (1938) depicts a grotesquely engorged and bulging, monomaniacal pair of eyes (not unlike the artist's own notoriously protuberant pair) in an unsettling foreshortened perspective that emphasized their disturbing testicular look. The work's explicit but ultimately disobedient allusion to Breton's text ("Les Vases comunicants" [The Communicating/Connecting Vessels], 1932) signals the tensions that prevented Rivera's adherence to the Surrealist movement under the leadership of Breton – a movement that he and others in Mexico such as Kahlo came to regard as elitist, patronizing, and affected. Breton foresaw the merging and mutual influence of waking and dream consciousness (Smejkal, 1982: 9) and Rivera seemed to subscribe to this view of psychic unity in their co-authored manifesto, treating it as a measure of liberty in the face

of repressive systems of belief. However, his image seems to satirize the persistent power-hungry supremacy of the ocularcentric paradigm reinforced by a binocular vision that merely doubles the domineering cyclopean gaze.

The text of the exhibition pamphlet by Peruvian poet and painter César Moro described how the installation of works enacted a decentering, identity-splitting interiorization of the gaze into a congregation of multiple, heterogeneous, and unnavigable sight-lines: "La mirada del hombre partida lejos, delante de sí, emprende ahora la marcha del cangrejo para interrogar la esfinge que lo mata, y poblar de ojos la oscuridad tentacular que lo envuelve de la cuna al sepulcro."[7] The side-stepping and regressive movement of the crab was evoked as a necessary form of perceptual involution, while the enigma of personal identity in art was alluded to with a frontispiece with an elliptical and self-effacing photograph by Álvarez Bravo, that was inverted when duplicated on the *contraportada* (back cover), showing a semi-transparent art nouveau glass panel of a draped female figure rested on a mound of debris.[8] The consolidating impact of this exhibition on the proliferation of ocular motifs is particularly traceable in the work of Guillermo Meza (1917–1977), whose informal training emerged out of the cutting, pasting, and coloring of newspaper illustrations that his parents resold as decorative images.[9] This assimilative practice and familiarity with mediated visual material informs his gouache *Ojos paranoia* (Paranoid Eyes, 1941) with its craning, multi-eyed clusters teeming in optical overabundance through windows onto a crossroads, and the two versions of a delirious, bestial *Polifemo* (Polyphemus, ink drawing, 1941) and oil on canvas (1944) dragging his bellowing carcass under the watchful presence of the vanquishing Theseus–Ulysses figure. The references in Meza's work to both the Argus-inspired multi-eyed and monocular perspective, combined with the shrouded head and contorted torso of the straitjacketing *La camisa blanca* (The White Shirt, 1946) that exploited the convolutions of drapery in metaphysical painting, elaborated upon the conundra of vision, the penitential gaze, and incarnated subjectivity in an idiosyncratic style that local reviewers were quick to label surrealist.[10] In the 1940s a significant number of figurative paintings in Mexico appropriated the religious rituals of castigated vision and penitence of popular faith in order to interrogate and make abject their own pictorial visualizations (and to repudiate official nationalism), with unmistakable allusions to the gestures of sadomasochistic unsighting exploited by surrealist photographers and cineastes: Carlos Orozco Romero's best-known work *La manda* (Penitence, 1942) portrays, through a hieratic frontal pose, a female figure whose head is tightly sheathed in a blinding shroud with a spiky nopal cactus as a necklace to mortify the flesh.[11] In Olga Costa's still life, *Corazón egoista* (Selfish Heart, 1951),[12] the leaf of the nopal is pierced and bisected vertically by a dagger on a table with other *vanitas* objects (symbols of mortality), so that the national emblem (linked to the eagle and cactus foundational image on the Mexican flag) acquires a penitential rather than patriotic dimension. Meza's *Blanco sobre nopal* (White on Cactus, 1947) reprises an ordinary practice amongst the poor of using cacti as a washing line to veil, subdue, and

make mysterious the thorny structure that symbolizes the pictorial nationalism of the post-revolutionary state and its increasingly regulated visuality.

The surrealist interest in found things, intervened objects, and surfaces (as well as in the deliberately undisciplined manipulation of negatives and exposures) coalesces with Álvarez Bravo's photographic portraiture of ruins, remains, and relics from the 1930s through to the 1950s.[13] This orientation was potently connected to the thematization of the *Destruction of the Old Order* (National Preparatory School, 1926) emblematized by José Clemente Orozco's post-revolutionary mural panel, accreted subsequently by Republican photomontages of devastated civilian infrastructure (Kati Horna's photomontages of ruinous multistory buildings, domestic detritus, and superimposed ghostly figures) but also imbued with a metaphysical melancholy attached to photography's deadening and subtractive still lifes. The extended metaphor of photography as a slicing and excising incursion on apparent reality reinforced the perceived affinity between its formal segmentation and the fragments of material culture and visual objects toward which it gravitated in its dissection of appearance. The dematerializing effect of photographic apprehension could also attest, through its phantasmagoric declension, to society's marginalization and evaporation of an inconvenient underclass. Human detritus and its visual residue occupy the center ground of artistic strategies in tune with the promiscuity of the periphery and the expelled. The wider valency of rubbish, dereliction, and waste-grounds as a form of visual currency invested with the presence of "los de abajo" (the underdogs) and in the charting of degraded urban culture and space is evidenced in photo-essays in the 1930s and distilled by Nacho López and Héctor García in the 1950s: rubbish becomes food for human scavengers; it is treated as a counter-landscape and as a dwelling place for society's unclean; and this contaminated consumption is mimicked by the camera's own appetite for the desultory and unclean subject. This counter-aesthetic and delinquent image-making operates as a counterpoint to the disturbing contemporaneous recycling of this motif in the bricolage proletarian homes and polluted margins inhabited by the children in *Los olvidados* (an illustration of this shantytown architecture underscores the opening credits in a way that prefigures the film's own fortuitous assemblage of urban segments). The irresistible gravitational pull of this cumulus of expunged materials becomes the deposit of the children's arrested development and expendability, as if the piecemeal image environment foreshadows their fall. Resistance to the aestheticization of poverty (made unpalatable through the material details collated by Buñuel from reportage or everyday encounters in poor neighborhoods or *paracaidista*[14] colonies) or its exploitation as parable fodder introduced a crucial and revealing fissure in the film between Figueroa's distanced evocation of a Mexican sublime[15] (upward-looking film camera holding cloud- sculptured sky, *maguey* (agave), and rim of earth in luminous composition) and the scrawl-like fall of Pedro's bundled corpse down the rubbish-strewn bank unfurling to the edge of the frame and screen in an act of disfiguration that speaks of the revelatory power of Buñuel's impurities predicated on a bisected vision.

The gestural symbolism to be found in canvases by a pioneering muralist and illustrator such as Roberto Montenegro – the disembodied outsized hands, statuesque doubles, mirrors, billowing window frames, classical masks, and theatrical vistas in *Los adioses* (Valediction, 1930), *Tacto* (Touch, 1939), and *Máscara de floripondios* (Mask with Tropical Flowers, 1944), for example – pointed to a not uncharacteristic competence in the deployment of an imagistic language and repertoire of objects conducive to a surrealist effect sourced in the work of Man Ray, Salvador Dalí, the early Buñuel, De Chirico, and Max Ernst. In his inset illustration for the cover of a book on the Mexican carnival festivities, Montenegro designed a suggestive multi-eyed mask in which the ex-voto-like insignia of the gaze are stacked in a tiered composition to create a vertical Argus (Vásquez Santana and Davila Garibi, 1931). This new artifact, customized for symbolic invention rather than ethnographic illustration, evokes the metamorphoses of the carnivalesque as a collective congregation of simultaneous perspectives conceived as a single visual entity. In Mexico, the vindication of communal autochthony and the sociability of picture-making introduces a distinctive permutation to the deployment of familiar objects and symbols associated with the radical subjectivism and inner logic of Surrealism. This vernacularization of surrealist imagery that is evident even in the nationalist recuperation or repatriation of "estranged" ethnic artifacts or popular objects (especially the pre-Hispanic mask) by the Mexican avant-garde was accelerated by the émigré presence of European Surrealists in the capital as visitors and long-term residents: along with André Breton's well-publicized engagements with Álvarez Bravo, Rivera, Kahlo, and others, there was the important nucleus of mixed media photographer and photo-essayist Kati Horna and artists Remedios Varo, Leonora Carrington, Gunther Gerzso (all of whom began to exhibit in the 1950s), and poet Benjamin Péret. In the late 1940s, through the experimental trilingual visual arts magazine *DYN*, the internationalization of Mexican visual practices interested in heterotopic models continued apace into a post-surrealist moment that linked pre-figurative art, non-contingent photography, and oneiric cinematography in an alliance against all forms of totalitarian visuality: the founding editor Wolfgang Paalen pushed beyond the remit of the Surrealist exhibition he had organized with César Moro toward a redefinition of its aesthetic rebellion that displaced any suspicion of communist ideology: "All totalitarian tyrannies banished modern art. They are right. For as a vital stimulus to imagination, modern art is an invaluable weapon in the struggle for freedom" (Paalen, 1942: s.n.).[16]

The Unwholesome Eye and Visual Mediations

The persistence of the Cyclopean eye as a motif in a critique of power and of visual realism's tendency to objectify and categorize characterizes the reflexive constructions and conceptual assemblage of mixed and multimedia strategies in

photography, film, and the visual arts in Mexico from 1930s to the 1950s. The modern tendency to fragment the experience of seeing and to stress the selective cuttings of perception rather than strive for a supposedly balanced whole attracted artists with an ambidextrous vocation that was acutely preoccupied by ocularcentric visuality and its discontents as well as by the directorial paradigm and the *mise en scène* or installation. These interrogators of the eye and visual direction include known and lesser-studied figures that were variously connected to the nonnaturalistic, metavisual, and intermedial trends in the European and Mexican avant-garde. The painter, collagist, and photographer Frida Kahlo (1907–1954) represented the interpenetration of eye and telescopic and camera lenses, as well as the clairvoyant eye or the masterful gaze of man as demiurge in her self-referential fictions that drew on mystical and esoteric iconography and scientific illustration. Ocular motifs are reprised both explicitly and metaphorically throughout her work in which identity is staged and relativized. Kahlo's acute interplay between reflectivity and reflexivity on canvas, extensive use of mirrors to execute representations of doubles and other proxies, and her fascination for the dissecting externalizations and excrescences of anatomical illustration (the bleeding paintbrush conceit in her 1951 self-portrait pointing to the aesthetic of the scalpel and the blade) converged in a seeing monster of her own invention.[17] In her painted diary she conjured a hallucinatory prehistoric monster dubbed the "horrendo ojosauro primitivo" (horrible, primitive eyesaurus) who challenges paleontologists and Darwinian scientists with the enormous cavity of its predatory eye, the measure of its intrusive penetrations hinted at by its abnormally elongated and sharpened snout.

Equally dissective in intent were the visual ironies at the expense of objective vision perpetrated by Álvarez Bravo. The experimental photographer, stillman (most notably on Buñuel's *Nazarín* [1959]), and frustrated cineaste liked to return the dead eye of the lens duplicated in optical icons encountered in commercial signage. From *Parábola óptica* (Optical Parable, 1931) to *Caja de visiones* (Box of Visions, 1938) he orchestrated the ambushing of the complacent gaze of informal viewing through playful de-simulations in which the pictured eye and the furtive, one-eyed ogle were at stake. While being described by his admirer Xavier Villaurrutia as the manipulator of a mechanical Cyclops – "capaz de captar imparcialmente lo que se ofrece ante su cristalino ojo de cíclope" (able to capture impartially that which offers itself up before his crystal-clear Cyclops' eye) – his own parable of decentered vision resisted such supremacist overlooking and definition (Villaurrutia, 2003: 34). The metafictive photograph (of *Parábola óptica*) inverts and makes illegible the name of the opticians, *La óptica moderna* (The Modern Optics/Optician), symbolized by a dominant, magnified single eye in an oval frame. Álvarez Bravo's optical puzzle transforms the banal into a haunting nest of destabilizing reflections. The sign overhangs the entrance of a bisected shop window, the reflective surface of which is overlaid with disembodied single and binocular staring eyes (on either side of the sign), with a partial reflection of the cyclopean eye underlying the spectral

viewing positions above lettering on the glass window that, when unscrambled, reads enigmatically "spirito." By teasing the viewer's eyes to linger over its magnetic visual paradoxes, this photograph makes evident active seeing.

A salient member of the crossover between avant-garde aesthetics, advertising, and cinematography, Agustín Jiménez (1901–1974) had associated with photographer Edward Weston in the 1920s and shadowed Sergei Eisenstein, the theorist of revolutionary montage, and his cameraman Eduard Tisse in the 1930s[18] during their influential sojourns in Mexico. He was the accomplished practitioner of the modernist close-up and angled perspectives creating quasi-anamorphic effects on the eye of the viewer. He documented the sealed "eyeless" faces of blind children in the Hospital de la Luz in 1933 while experimenting with double exposures and Man Ray-inspired rayographs (Córdova, 2005: 93). As stillman on *El fantasma del convento* (The Ghost in the Convent, 1934) he captured, in full-frontal excision, the inquisitorial gaze of gothic horror (the obsessive eyes of the deranged monk) through the framing device of a grid. This was to become a voyeuristic construction rehearsed in recessive shots in his cinematography for Buñuel in both *El bruto* and *Ensayo de un crimen*. Dramatic cinema's Faustian pact with the audience, whereby its own movement requires their enduring, collective immobility, transfixed and subjugated by the image on screen, is replayed by the recurrence of a viewing de / vice in which the organization of such immobility is problematized.

The rupture of the social realist paradigm and prescriptive nationalism, at the end of the 1950s, by the generation of artists linked to the anti-establishment criticism of the *Interioristas* and *Nueva Presencia* movement, had an acknowledged precursor in Nacho López, the photo-essayist, photo-installationist, film-photographer, and director.[19] Responsive, along with writers Octavio Paz and Carlos Fuentes, to the heretical turn of Buñuel's films (with their disruptive playing with the genres and conventions of Mexican cinema),[20] López extended the reach of directorial photography to embrace constructed events and perfomative docu-fictions that exposed photographic artifice and voyeurism in the process of unmasking the cultural regime determining the conduct of the gaze in public (Bartra, 2007). His photomontage self-portrait from 1950 contains an homage to surrealist photography that exposes its embedded influence on the self-consciousness and deconstruction of art-making in Mexico. López dissects the giant oculus in a reflexive composition that unbalances the self-determining will of dominant perspective, while alluding to the blinkered quality of vision. He splits his double-exposure visage with eyes wide-shut with a paper print sherd that reproduces Man Ray's metronomic single eye and which, by occupying the gap in the bisected composition, forms a cyclopean mask of an aesthetic that ruptures its host's identity. The breakdown of the photographer's portrait, and its arrangement of trademark aesthetic signs, is encircled by a necklace of cut-out graflex lenses (against a dark background) that "look" in multiple orbits without subjective illumination. The title of Man Ray's iconic photograph of the fantastic ocular

object (1923) of his own invention holds the subtext of López's self-deprecating critique as a professional photojournalist: it reads with iconoclastic irony *Object to be Destroyed*. The insertion, in López's montage, of this reference torn from the archive of subversive constructions, capitalizes also on the way the object's provocation rests on its interdisciplinary design. López's advocacy of a self-critical documentary visualization needs to be understood in terms familiar to Buñuel when in 1953, in a celebrated public talk in Mexico ("El cine, instrumento de poesía" [Cinema, an Instrument of Poetry], published in 1958), he cited Octavio Paz: "Basta que un hombre encadenado cierre sus ojos para que pueda hacer estallar el mundo" (All it takes is for a chained man to shut his eyes to make the world explode) (1958: 1). In López's "Cíclope" (Cyclops), from his meditative and revealingly hybrid *Fotopoemáticos*, the patron monster of all-seeing viewfinders is invoked, "Cíclope fotográfico / Voraz retratista del poliedro humano" (Photographic Cyclops / Voracious Portraitist of the Human Polyhedron), by an artist interested in unseating official visuality. This he pursued by materializing the disappeared of uneven and corrupt modernization through uncompromising photo-essays, many of which evidenced the generalized awareness of the spectator typical of his approach ("Sólo los humildes van al infierno" [Only the Poor Go To Hell], published in *Siempre!*, 1954), as well as through stealthier manipulations of the viewer: by restaging and apprehending the masculinist gaze in directed photo-shoots using a model / actress ("Cuando una mujer parte plaza por Madero" [When a Woman Causes a Stir along Madero Avenue, *Siempre!*, 1953]), or, most famously, recording the passage of a freshly minted unclothed shop mannequin (labeled "La novia soñada" [The dream girlfriend] in one of the published frames) on its scandalous way to its final destination in a boutique window.

Carried like an idolatrous trophy through the capital's congested streets and transport system by its maker ("La Venus se fue de juerga por los barrios bajos" [The Venus Went out on the Town in the Poorer Neighborhoods], *Siempre!*, 1953), the mannequin's entrapment of the emotive gaze proved to be a surrealist gag with a serious disclosure. The palpable contrast between the mannequin's flawless white finish and the promiscuity of the proletarian space it traverses exposed the *iconophagy*[21] of the street and its popular consumers (in one shot, the foreign-looking mannequin and her male chaperone stop to look at a wall covered in layers of Mexican film posters as if the simulacrum of the screen had acquired a material twin). There is a compelling parallel between López's humorous photographic narrative, with its calibration of the accidental and the intentional, and the re-emergence of Man Ray's intervened mannequins (posed in the International Exhibition of Surrealism in Paris, 1938) in the context of *Ensayo de un crimen*. This revenant episode, shot knowingly by Agustín Jiménez, revolves around a sacrificial proxy object which is fabricated to showcase fashion but turns into an instrument to assuage the protagonist's misogynist fantasy. Unlike López's ambulatory replaying, which depends on the bond between the mannequin and her plebeian creator, in the film's oppressive interiors actor Ernesto Alonso plays a supercilious

aesthete, would-be arch manipulator, and wealthy amateur ceramist convinced of the deadly accuracy of his murderous desires, who acquires a look-alike mannequin from the workshop where his next victim, Lavinia, has posed as a model. The possession is meant to foreshadow his conquest, and the ownership of the inanimate substitute is both part of his attempt at seduction and an indicator of his lethal design: although Archibaldo de la Cruz's domineering bourgeois persona seeks to savor absolute power through premeditated destruction, his plans are repeatedly disrupted by unforeseen events despite his cunning and vigilance. López's most mordant thematization of perspective and power sought to similarly outwit rather than replicate photographically carceral regimes of surveillance associated with the criminalization of the poor and the subaltern. His reportage on Lecumberri penitentiary ("Prisión de sueños" [Prison of Dreams], for *Mañana*, 1950) exploited the architectural vistas of the panopticon design of the complex to visualize, through disturbing photographs of a carceral space that seemed to extend its model of control and abjection beyond the frame, the plunging verticals of the cyclopean one-party state in which the "Primer Mandatario" ([Supreme Leader], especially during the presidencies of Miguel Alemán and Adolfo Ruiz Cortines) enjoyed unconditional coverage and adulation in the mass media (Mraz, 2009: 156–157). Several images from the series adopt the perspective of the sentinel prison guard looking down the telescopic sight of a rifle from his aerie in a plunging panoramic shot that enacts the menacing one-eyed aim of surveillance. Suspended above as from an aerial viewpoint, López seemed to scale architectural vantage points to draw attention to the specular regime in which the photographer, granted access by the authorities but not the inmates, could scout his subjects – contrasting the clean diagonals afforded the controlling tower with the squalid Piranesi fretwork of passageways and inner chambers experienced at ground level. One of the most frequently anthologized photographs belongs to a series enlarging prisoners' disembodied hands and arms pleading from between gaps in barred windows and cracks in corrugated metallic doors. In a lugubrious atmosphere worthy of film noir lighting, the camera, usually at eye-level, pans down (to where the photographer's feet would be) toward two grasping hands, belonging to an anonymous supplicant, pushed through the narrow, serrated rupture at the bottom of a cell door. Héctor García's later portrait of militant artist David Alfaro Siqueiros behind bars in Lecumberri, staring confrontationally at the camera while his arm projects forward to stop the lens, encapsulates clearly the antagonism toward the mediatic regime and its instrumentalization of visual reportage (Kismaric, 2004: 159).[22] The photographer's interest in charting the intrusive and voyeuristic gaze as a collective, co-creative event rather than a solitary pursuit leads to a long series on "los mirones" (the gawpers) in the cityscape. Gawping compulsively at orchestrated spectacles or cordoned-off disasters, these overlookers overlooked provided a retroactive commentary that did not evade the photographer's own inherently compromised and journalistically, often complicit but unseen, spectating.

Cross-cuttings of the Eye in Art and Cinematography

Two prescient figurative works from the 1930s by Agustín Lazo (1896–1971) and Julio Castellanos (1905–1947), artists aligned in contrasting degrees with the hermetic turn that the arts took in response to the more declamatory and self-evidencing narratives of politicized image-making, seem to reprise and ghost the caesura of the voyeuristic eye of the overseer, onlooker, or spectator perpetrated on screen by Buñuel. The interplay between film shot and pictorial composition based on a hermeneutics of impeded vision seemed to promote visual experience based on ever-increasing interpolations rather than transparency. It is interesting to note that Luis Cardoza y Aragón, the Guatemalan experimental poet and art critic (who, like Castellanos and Lazo, interacted closely with members of the *Contemporáneos* group and visitors like Antonin Artaud), was quick to expose the cultish treatment of frame as pictorial composition in *Un chien andalou*, anticipating the calque of its influence on painting in Mexico. Reviewing eroticism in film in 1933 in the innovative magazine *Imagen* (a vehicle for registering the transformative impact of new media on the everyday), Cardoza y Aragón, while commending *L'Âge d'or*'s inventive reimagining of de Sadean mysticism, considered the earlier film to be, by contrast, still rather conventionally in thrall to the unities of the pictorial image and the allure of its cosmetic finish. This helpfully points to the residual ambiguity of the descratory act that reinstates the centrality of what it violates. As Buñuel explained in conversation with the genre-infracting writer and ironist Max Aub (also exiled in Mexico), the unsighting is a vandalistic act that plays on the knife-edge between "mirar y ver" (looking and seeing), between optical illusion and penetrative understanding. So it is interesting to place Buñuel's paradoxical interplay between insurrectionary radicalism and the ingrained prurience of punitive Catholicity (revolving around his use of the *coup d'oeil*)[23] on a spectrum of penumbral flickers in which the photo-eye of the camera does not replicate the human eye and its habitual radius but envisions what is either unseen or invisible in a disobliging apprehension that strikes out directorial omniscience. Buñuel's early theorization of segmentation and the fluidity of the dissolve that transforms visual objects and blurs singularities is predicated on a struggle for control of the lens, "that eye without tradition, without morals, without prejudices" (cited in White, 2000: 132–133). It is perhaps amusing to reinstate the monkish disguise Buñuel adopted in desecratory play to disclose the quasi-mystical dimension of his thinking about darkness and vision in cinematic rituals and the disciplining of perception and its objects (in the ending of *Él* the castigatory impulse resolves itself through the implausible serenity of the bigot and misogynist whose newfound abstinence is symbolized by his monk's habit). It is worth remembering the stringent and exacting aesthetic of film that Buñuel articulated in the 1920s before publicly referencing Freudian tropes (and Apollinaire) to unseat prosaic readings of filmic effects, as it seems to elevate the selective eye over the involuntary installations of mechanical or impersonal vision. Arguably, the chastisement of the hypothetical eye of perspective centered in the head that is witnessed in

meta-filmic sling-shots or piercings directed at a putative viewer, voyeur, or camera lens in his 1950s films fulfills a castigatory trajectory that implicates the director of "películas alimenticias" (bread-and-butter films, as Buñuel described his Mexican films) in which the mainstream, bourgeois melodrama mingled promiscuously with an anti-establishment visuality. In the strategic, anti-neorealism of "El cine instrumento de poesía" Buñuel cast darkness as the habitat of the spectator almost as if it were the place of unknowing. The cinema he suggests can be a proscenium for a collective "closing of eyes" that film induces as an unpeeling of the unconscious subject, the "I" behind the Descartesean cogito. The epiphanic potential of the unnatural scaling of the image on the screen seemed to develop Buñuel's early interest in hypnotism and amateurish experimentation with female mediums whom he would "dormía" (put to sleep). One of these subjects he remembered for a physical trait he found repulsive – "muy fea, con un párpado colgando, horrible" (a hideous woman, with a horrible, drooping lid) – and it is worth recalling the distinguishing protuberance of his own heavy-lidded eyes that became a defining trait of his pictorial and photographic persona as a visionary of the ironic *guiño*, *esperpento* and visual gag (Aub, 1985: 101). In keeping with the anatomical mutation exaggerated in Hans Bellmer's perverse objects, where the erotic look is closely bound up with cruelty and the death instinct, in Buñuel the occluded eye as much as the partially sighted or glutinous opacity of the blind/ed eye haunt his imagery as virulently as the eroticization of the aperture of the camera as female sexual orifice, unveiled dramatically by the beggar woman in the profanation of *The Last Supper* in *Viridiana* (1961), and the failed attempt at stitching shut the labial female eye in *Él*. The strongly embodied idea of double vision in which the sighted and the unsighted see equally in a bifurcated (rather than binocular) world of impressions (consider the lecherous and deliriously autocratic blind beggar and the quasi-mute witness of the Indian boy "Ojitos" (Little Eyes) in *Los olvidados*), without necessarily looking in the same way, offers a creative indeterminacy, akin to the surrealist delirium of interpretation, for a director who described himself as instinctively unliberal and who so consummately personified on screen male sexual obsessions, tyrannies, and phobias: through the theatre of the peep-show and Grand Guignol (*Él*); the drive for possession enshrined in entomological showcases with pierced specimens and necrophilic worship of the inert female body (*Abismos de pasión*, aka *Cumbres Borrascosas* [Wuthering Heights], 1953); the lure of idealized automata and fetishistic mannequin (*Ensayo de un crimen*). The mesmeric power of the eyes is part of the myth that holds the victim captive in the popular understanding of hypnosis as the trigger of suggestion (rather than empathetic reciprocity) exercised by a controlling and inscrutable psychic shaman or analyst figure. The association between this transfixing gaze, the shot, and automatism situates "being-seen" as a catalytic force in self-objectifying perception. The conceptual tension between the permissive latitude of "the dark" (the involuntary, amorphous, and random) and the orderly administrations of self-aware and focused direction holds a dialectical tension that accounts for the visual incongruities of Buñuel's films and the comically inflated control-freakery of his delusional male protagonists.

Arturo de Cordova's explicitly bisected performance in *Él* enacts a disjunctive aesthetic: shown in artful contrasts of light and shadow by Gabriel Figueroa's camerawork, he is the punctilious and ceremonious Catholic gentleman of the conservative establishment and sadistic self-pitying monster in the marital home, pursuing the restitution of his family's property in an increasingly fixated way that mirrors his struggle to possess his wife in absolute terms. Cast alternately as predatory and pathetic, reasonable and compulsive, his inquisitorial surveillance is undone by something within that is uncontrollable despite his self-determination. Buñuel readily acknowledged in interviews the degree to which a resemblance between fictional and autobiographical persona could be construed: the character's antics perhaps farcically aped those of the director figure as demented, power-hungry visionary, but did so in a double, reflexive arc that implicated political as well as artistic direction: precisely at a time when the decent presidential persona (in an undemocratic state) had become coterminous with the effective dictatorship of taste and repressive morality of a conservative and self-satisfied middle-class administration. The obsessive focus of the omniscient director shifting between precision and rebellion, entreaty and command, method and improvisation in shooting a scene with actors and technicians on a set that is nominally under his control, reminds one that the despotism of the aesthetic process enables the subversive effects of the drama even as it fails to enact the radical liberty of its desire: "Y te lo repito, cuando cierro los ojos, soy anarquista, nihilista, hasta que los abro" (As I said before, when I shut my eyes, I am an anarchist, a nihilist, until I open them), as Buñuel confessed to Max Aub (1985: 101). The hypnogogenic images pertaining to half-waking, half-dreaming visual experience that begin to colonize Mexican art and poetry in the 1930s seem to play on the liminality of Buñuel's bisected eye and bisected cinematic visuality, where the gaze is always feral (the "wild eye" of Breton's manifesto on painting, 1925) (Krauss and Livingstone, 1985: 20) and unwholesome, undomesticated by a single, regulatory aesthetic, perspectival axis, or moral compass.

In Julio Castellanos' portable fresco, *Cirugía casera* (Improvised Surgery, 1935),[24] the pointed edge of a folded cloth rather than a blade or scalpel is wielded undramatically by a village woman as an almost imperceptible spike or thorn is extracted within the casing of an unassuming threshold that acts as a furtive *mise en abime* of a second, visualizing aperture. The eye is temporarily bisected by the cloth in the composition. The barefoot indigenous woman with upturned face endures the procedure impassively in a closely knit composition of interlocking bodies rendered with sculptural volume that exudes a composure and serenity at odds with the incision and the instinctive wince-inducing sight of such contact with the cornea. As in the film, where a man (the director in person) calmly resorts to a razor to bisect the eye of a young woman, Castellanos re-enacts this poise and the unblinking compliance of the subject. In this home-made surgery between women who are the mirror image of each other, the masculinity of Buñuel's shaving razor is neutralized by something akin to the wiping cloth of a Saint Veronica (that succors and conserves

the imprint of the other in the paradigmatic intervention of depictive art on the physical world). The lidless eye prized open by the hand of a female actor intent ostensibly on remedying vision, but perhaps just as effectively modulating or even substituting one way of seeing with another aesthetically authored and authorized reshaping, casts a knowing extra-pictorial glance at Western art historical consecration of the eye as an inward-looking window as well as an outward-looking organ. The classical topos of the eye as the window for the soul (Cicero, Lucretius) was reprised in Renaissance portraiture through Leonardo da Vinci and Albrecht Dürer with the emphasis on the convincing representation of the eyes (rendering surface luster and reflection) as an aperture onto an individual's psyche and its outlook on the world. Castellanos' classical proportion, in which draped figures softened by curvaceous modeling are vernacularized (through the insignia of the *rebozo* or shawl) as well as presenting the immobility of timeless forms, decontextualizes the prosaic gesture into an introspective meditation on representation. It might be argued that Buñuel's blinding then relativizes female identity through an act that, in terms of pictorial allegory, makes eye-less the illusionistic isotopic space of perspectival visualization and thereby displaces a dominant field of vision defined by male ocularcentricity. Castellanos deliberately angles the viewing eyes of his female subjects so that both appear singular (monocular) with one, directed upward, being temporarily blinded so as to see more clearly while the downward gaze of the surgeon is absorbed into the membranous interior of the other's cornea. This pictorial circularity of the interplay of looking and unseeing gazes is only apparent to the viewer as a pictorial conceit regarding interpenetration, as the sightline of one pierces the cornea of the other as effectively as the thorn that is being dislodged.

Agustín Lazo's untitled ink drawing (*c*.1930–1932)[25] from a somnambulistic series that coincided with his interest in non-naturalistic performance and scenographies, as well as the enigmatic nocturnal poems such as "Nocturno de la estatua" (Nocturne of the Statue) by his close friend Villaurrutia (member of the group of artistic "deviants," megalomaniacs, and visionaries satirized by Antonio Ruiz in his portrait as *Los paranoicos* [The Paranoid Ones], 1941), explores the transposition of outer and inner eye in a cloistered room. A sculptor is seen using a sharp implement to incise the right eye of a legless female nude erected on a stool. While this may replay the Pygmalion myth (in which the artist's statue of an idealized woman comes alive), the emphasis falls on the carving delineation (or gouging?) of the eye, the symbolic granting of (second) sight through artistic creation. This prescribed eye of the aesthetic point of view, the sightless eye of the simulacrum made to look, is necessarily defined as *fore*-sight since it is not a biological given but a created perception. The point of this composition is to enact a substitution of visual agency which seems implicit in the slicing of the object at the center of physiological optics in *Un chien andalou*. According to Lazo, when reviewing what he termed Pablo Picasso's "juego sobrerrealista de la vida" (supra-realist game of life) (in his designs for the ballet *Parade*), poetry's internal illumination allied to the description afforded by "los ojos del subconsciente" revealed "el sentido oculto de la vida

aparente" (the eyes of the subconscious [revealed] the hidden meaning of life's appearance) (Lazo, 1933: s.n.). The eyes of the poetic painter (or photographer or director) are described as "clarividentes," clairvoyant and sybilline, offset by the parasitic voyeurism of conventional realism. Frida Kahlo's pencil drawings of an *Ojo avisor* (Prescient Eye, 1934) and a self-portrait with a detached, enigmatic third eye (1932) reprise this metamorphic and oracular agency. A friend of Álvarez Bravo (who was also an avid Francophile), Lazo published his translation of poet Gérard de Nerval's visionary autobiography *Aurélia* that argues that dream is the penetrating threshold to an invisible world of alternative, immanent being and that the artist perceives as through enucleated eye-sockets (as in the celebrated shot of Pierre Batcheff's ecstatic blank orbs in *Un chien andalou*): "Le rêve est un seconde vie. Je n'ai pu percer sans frémir ces portes d'ivoire ou de corne qui nous séparent du monde invisible" (Dream is a second life. I have been unable to pierce without trembling those doors of ivory or horn that separate us from the invisible world) (cited in Béguin and Richer, 1960: 359).[26] Buñuel's own photograph of a blind beggar from an inner-city slum (from a series taken while scouting for locations for *Los olvidados*, preserved in Gabriel Figueroa's archive) captures the unsealed milky-white gaze that for the director was analogous to the cinema screen: "bastaría que el párpado blanco pudiera reflejar la luz que le es propia para que hiciera saltar al universo" (the white eyelid of the screen would only need to reflect the light that is its own to blow up the universe) (Buñuel, 1958: 1). The free optical mutation of this aesthetic afforded a controlled and exacting strategy of contestation that by making palpable the grotesque disproportion of its own visualizing ambition became an exemplary practice for image-making in Mexico that, while seeking to be anti-authoritarian, had to guard against its proclivity to become hegemonic.

The Last Arena

As this study has sought to show, the identification of sight with power developed a curious, often secretive and self-referential metavisual mythology in photography and the arts during the years dominated by an increasingly authoritarian and media-conscious one-party state (under the Partido Revolucionario Institucional) in Mexico and dictatorial and totalitarian regimes in Europe and the Soviet Union in the 1920s and 1930s, followed by the economic and urban modernization allied to the political conservatism of the *presidenciato* of Miguel Alemán (1946–1952) and centralization of the media under Adolfo Ruíz Cortines (1952–1958), with the predominance of the presidential persona and the silencing of oppositional discourse. Buñuel's dissident work, with its ironic humor and split aesthetic (in which the documentary and the fantastic collide), became a point of overt or coded reference for artists who aspired to unyoke creative vision from political and class patronage, and to mine subjective experience to counter authoritarian normalcy. Buñuel's

subversive play at the expense of the Polyphemus eye proved revelatory: its outward curvature and voracious appetite was inverted, multiplying the image of an object through the polyhedron effect of a liberated visualizing aesthetic and practice.

It is in the work of artist Gunther Gerzso (1915–2000), as film scenographer of urban locales during the classic period of national production, that the interdisciplinary bridge between the visual arts and Buñuel acquires its most subtle ocular syntax in the context of the struggle between abstract and figurative trends, overt and introverted sight (Eder, 1994: 11–12). While his paintings depended on overlaying, assemblage of fragmented forms, skeletal infrastructures and exposed scaffolding, with an emphasis on receding, textured, and superimposed surfaces to which he attached allusive but enigmatic titles (*Ciudad perdida* [Lost City], 1948, *Ciudad abandonada* [Abandoned City], 1953, *Mal de ojo* [Eye Affliction], 1957, *Paisaje ciego* [Blind Landscape], *Aparición* [Apparition], 1960), his work as a film scenographer was often required to be realistic or emblematic, although undoubtedly the armature of theatrical space informed his abstract spatial compositions. His paintings seem to decontextualize and dismantle the illusionistic constructions of the film sets while including fissures, cracks, keyholes, and other openings that unpick or infringe the surface to gesture at something intangible beyond the representable, as in Buñuel's deconstructive cinema. The projecting surface of the cinema screen blends into his treatment of the canvas as frame and wall.[27] The interlacings of strata in his paintings prompted Paz to suggest that "in each of Gerzso's pictures there is a secret. His painting does not show it but signals to it. It is beyond the picture, or rather behind the canvas. The function of those lacerations, wounds and sexual orifices is to allude to the other side, to that which eyes do not see."[28] The insertion of these slit apertures (*desgarraduras* [lacerations], *heridas* [wounds]) set like false eyes of perspective reveal, with their blocked vanishing points, the constricted range of unified viewing. Increasingly, his canvases with their fine, membranous shading enacted a slicing of the depicted surfaces with razor-sharp wounds, perforations, and dissected plains with fissures in focused relief. Paz attributed these surgical incisions of the representational surface to the operations of a ritual implement, the obsidian eye-knife of Aztec sacrifice used to eviscerate and flay; a poetic contrivance not unlike the startling blade effect of the crucifix-dagger that Buñuel planted in *Viridiana* as part of the film's serrated, iconoclastic irony. Not only does the figurative object in Gerzso's work recede and dissolve, supplanted by an unfathomable apparition, but this perceptual presence severs our ties to the visible. Gerzso collaborated with Agustín Jiménez on the proletarian melodrama of *El bruto*, set in spaces subject to ruin and dereliction; in nested, enclosed *casas de vecindad* (popular tenements) due to be demolished and ramshackle dwellings with precarious and porous walls that absorb the homeless; interminable-seeming workshops full of stacked planks and narrow tunnel-like passageways that disappear in penumbral recesses with protruding shelves. The scenography is permeated by carceral and labyrinthine patterns and an exposed infrastructure (shot in film noir counterpoint), while the central character is a

butcher practiced in the arts of cutting, slicing, evisceration, and dismemberment. In the nocturnal flight scene the anti-hero, instinctive and violent, follows a trajectory that suggests the perforation and dismantling of strata after strata, creating an unsettling effect on the spectator through a successive proximity, a regressive path, and a confined viewing position that recalls the narrow sight afforded the hounded figure of the fugitive. From his concealed hideout, "el bruto," with his pugilistic physique, peers through a crack without realizing that his eye will betray him.

The notoriously eccentric and obsessively self-referential artist Manuel González Serrano (1917–1960) embodies an intriguing convergence of surrealist motifs relating to transgression and illumination that adds one final turn to Buñuel's roaming eye and the struggle to infringe boundaries: we encounter erotic obsession and violence; a schizophrenic personality subject to delusions of grandeur and paranoia recorded in visionary self-portraits; scatological, morbid, and phallocentric imagery; enigmatic scenarios and oneiric landscapes treated in a faux realist style fueled by an addiction to drugs and alcohol. González Serrano was connected to prominent individual artists rather than circles, and dated his own aesthetic awakening to the International Surrealist exhibition of 1940. He had solo shows and important commissions in Mexico City and Hollywood in the 1940s. His excesses were reported in the press and he was imprisoned and finally sectioned, undergoing a horrifying lobotomy. He appears in his guise as "Mandarin del Celeste Imperio" (Mandarin of the Celestial Empire) with staring, dilated pupils and an outlandish headdress in an entry in Frida Kahlo's diary that refers to him humorously as "touched but not mad" (Conde *et al.*, 1998: 51). González Serrano's disturbing works turned persecution and surveillance into a pictorial dramaturgy, with his male-centered visualization of chastised, castrated, and martyred flesh in which semen and the phallus are recognizably transcribed in lurid still lifes and ruined landscapes.[29]

His well-known painting *Aprendices de torero* (Apprentice Bullfighters, 1948)[30] seems to have provided some kind of visual residue for Gabriel Figueroa (whose work was often inspired by pictorial models borrowed from the contemporary avant-garde) in the shooting of *Los olvidados*. Set in a gap of waste ground flanked by the shadow of colonial monastery on one side and a weathered wall on the other, four figures with red capes and one riding a stick with a bull's skull on the end perform a mock bullfight. The receding perspective takes in a classical amphitheater and the skeletal armature of incomplete high-rise buildings behind which the outline of the distant modern metropolis is glimpsed. This is a rehearsal for a gladiatorial spectacle that entails a ritual sacrifice before a multitude of spectators. In the play-acting one of the men must assume the role of the persecuted but defiant animal while the others taunt him, attracting his attention with the tormenting red cape, the color of which portends his bloody death. The apprenticeship in death-defying and adversarial masculinity played out in the sinister shadows cast by monuments, the scale and verticality of which speaks of institutional authority and regulation, presages a violent ending, a death foretold, for the rituals circumscribing

the agency of men from marginalized communities in which the artist subsumes himself. A productive dialogue can be established between this haunted interstitial landscape and the bullfighting play scene in *Los olvidados*, set in a space of multilayered dereliction, in which the camera's implicit oculus, occupying the position of the irresistible provocations of the off and on camera cape, is charged down by the simulated bullhead of a snorting boy. This gesture of aggression that reaches beyond the medium (and its creative manipulator) to the overlooker, implicating him/her in the totalizing dream of traditional dramatic cinema, projects beyond the frame its active goring of the image toward the prospect of a less objectifying, co-opted, and facile, populist visuality.

Notes

1 "The Horrible, Primitive "Eyesaurus" / ancient animal that fell dead to enslave the sciences. It looks up … and has no name. / Let's give him one: the Horrible Eyesaurus!" (cited in Lowe, 1995: 237). Author's translation.
2 "With the wide shut and open eyes that we use in sleep/dream." X. Villaurrutia's essay on Agustín Lazo (cited in García Ponce and Schneider, 1988: 160).
3 See Redon's *Eye-Baloon* (1878) and the lunar *Vision* (1881). In addition, see ocular motifs of the lithographic series *Dans le rêve* (In the Dream, 1879), *Everywhere eyeballs are a Flame* (1888), and his painting *The Cyclops* (*c*.1914), reproduced in Druick (1994: 12, 133, 191, 345).
4 *Cortina* or *Cortina con sombra* (Curtain with Shadow), reproduced in Álvarez Bravo (2007).
5 "This is the dead land / This is cactus land […] The eyes are not here / There are no eyes here / In this valley of dying stars / In this hollow valley / This broken jaw of our lost kingdoms […] / Sightless, unless / The eyes reappear / As the perpetual star […] The hope only / Of empty men" (Eliot, 1969).
6 For a discussion of nationalism and visual media, see Segre (2010). For the debates on Surrealism in Mexico, see Larrea (1944), Schneider (1978), Smejkal (1986), Bonet (1989/1990), Pérez Turrent (1996), and Grimberg (2000).
7 "The gaze of man departed far away, ahead of itself, now undertakes the advance of the crab to interrogate the sphinx that kills him, and to people with eyes the tentacular darkness that envelops him from cradle to grave."
8 See the photograph *Sobre el invierno* (On Winter, 1939). On the solo exhibition that included this image, see Villaurrutia (1945).
9 Guillermo Meza, undated autobiographical manuscript, archive of the Galería de Arte Mexicano, Mexico City.
10 See Meza's recollection of the exhibition (Romero Keith, 1985: 126–127). For a selection of his works see Flores Guerrero (1957).
11 Reproduced in Martín Lozano (2000: 221). See Nelken (1994).
12 Reproduced in Oles and Ramírez (2007: 307).
13 On the trope of the ruin, see chapter 8 in Segre (2007).
14 The term refers to shantytowns that sprang up randomly to absorb the internal migration to the city by the landless or destitute.

15 On the anti-aesthetic turn in his dealings with Buñuel see Figueroa (2005).
16 See Horna (1992) and Kloyber (2000).
17 See *The Two Fridas* (1939), *Self-portrait with the Portrait of Dr Farill* (1951), *Portrait of Don Guillermo Kahlo* (1951), and *The Love Embrace of the Universe* (1949).
18 See Karetnikova (1991) and Salazkina (2009).
19 See Goldman (1995) and Mraz (1999).
20 For a discussion of Buñuel's subversion of genre conventions, see Segre (1997), Vásquez (2000), and Fernández (2000).
21 The term is a neologism referring to the cannibal-like ingestion of simulacra or icons.
22 See García (1987) and (1992).
23 The reference in French to a singular glance or gaze semantically evokes slicing and segmentation that Buñuel exploits through the focal aggression of the voyeur.
24 Reproduced in Cordero Reiman (2011: 97). For tropes of vision and perspective see Elkins (1994).
25 Reproduced in García Ponce and Schneider (1988: 74).
26 See Lazo, *Aurelia* (1942). See also Negrete (2006) and Figueroa (2008).
27 For Gerzso on film, see Aldrete-Haas (2003).
28 "En cada cuadro de Gerzso hay un secreto. Su pintura no lo muestra: lo señala. Está más allá del cuadro. Mejor dicho: *detrás* del cuadro. La función de esas desgarraduras, heridas y oquedades sexuales es aludir a lo que está del otro lado y que no ven los ojos" (cited Eder, 1994: 170).
29 See *La flor de la alquimia* (The Flower of Alchemy), *El perro metafisico* (The Metaphysical Dog), *Los cuervos* (The Crows), *Autorretrato flechado* (Self-portrait Pierced by Arrows), *Borrego desollado* (Skinned Lamb), *La ventana* (The Window) in González de Noval (1998).
30 Reproduced in Cordero Reiman (2011: 157).

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10

Out of Place, Out of Synch

Errant Movement and Rhythm in Buñuel's Mexican Comedies

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In Luis Buñuel's Mexican comedies, *El gran calavera* (The Great Madcap, 1949), *Subida al cielo* (Ascent to Heaven, aka Mexican Bus Ride, 1952), and *La ilusión viaja en tranvía* (Illusion Travels by Streetcar, 1954), characters and objects find themselves frequently both out of place and out of synch with the social worlds they inhabit. As a cultural wanderer who inadvertently found himself working within the Mexican studio system in the late 1940s and 1950s, Buñuel's status was similarly one of spatial and temporal dislocation. As a deterritorialized outsider to Mexico, his position illustrated Edward Said's definition of the traveler, who "understand(s) a multiplicity of disguises, masks, and rhetorics. Travellers must suspend the claim of customary routine in order to live in new rhythms and rituals … the traveller crosses over, traverses territory, and abandons fixed positions all the time" (cited in Howe, 2003). While this crossing over of borders – whether they be geographical or discursive – clearly denotes a structure of movement, it also implies transgression. Indeed, this is borne out by the etymology of the word: "transgress" derives its meaning from the Latin for "go over" or "cross over." Buñuel's art of transgression can therefore be seen as one of motion, both literal and metaphorical.

Within the immediate social and historical context of Mexico's miracle years, the trope of movement also acquired symbolic weight. On his arrival in Mexico in 1946, Buñuel bore witness to a nation which was itself on the move. Under the administrations of Miguel Alemán Valdés (1946–1952) and Adolfo Ruiz Cortines (1952–1958), Mexico's embrace of modernization was in large part hidebound to the mobile routes of migration from the country to the city, and the relatively free and deregulated flow of capital and goods between the United States and Mexico. These transformations, moreover, acquired a rhythmic shape, predominantly

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marked by speed and acceleration. As such, Buñuel's social comedies are not only informed by a metaphysics of movement, a way of seeing that takes motion as its starting point, but are a tangible response to movement itself. Through the writing of Rosi Braidotti and Michel de Certeau, this chapter will examine how movement and rhythm are orchestrated in the frame in *El gran calavera*, *Subida al cielo*, and *La ilusión viaja en tranvía*. In doing so, it will show how Buñuel's social comedies throw light on the social and geographical contradictions of a country caught in the grip of modernization.

The cultural production of exiled artists is frequently conceptualized in terms of loss. The geographical displacement of the exile is often inextricably bound up with their social displacement, where their break with national or cultural origins frequently lays emphasis on the importance of belonging – or rather, not belonging – in an alien land. A structure of deterritorialized outsideness thus pervades the art of the exile: their alienation and fragmentation throw light on the spatial relationships between the inside and the outside, and the familiar and the unfamiliar. The feminist philosopher Rosi Braidotti, however, outlines a more nuanced distinction between the figures of the exile and the migrant, with that of the nomad. Unlike the migrant or exile, "the nomad does not stand for homelessness, or compulsive displacement; it is rather a figuration for the kind of subject who has relinquished all idea, desire and nostalgia for fixity. This figuration expresses the desire for an identity made of transitions, successive shifts, and co-ordinated changes, without and against an essential unity" (1994: 22). Here, Braidotti's writing on the nomad would appear to chime more specifically with Buñuel's own position as an artist, whose films famously transgress the fixity of social and moral structures. Like Braidotti's nomad, Buñuel pursues freedom from dominant social and cultural narratives. As a Surrealist, he famously sought to free the mind from conscious control, and liberate the individual from the moral strictures of bourgeois society. A resident of France, the United States, and Mexico, Buñuel was quick to stress his cosmopolitanism, stating in his autobiography that "all patriotic displays make me nauseous" (cited in Acevedo-Muñoz, 2003: 66). Indeed, his filmmaking famously exemplifies the act of "crossing over," shifting fluidly between different cultures and languages, between art and commerce, and the margins and the center.

According to Braidotti, the movement of the nomad similarly traverses discursive boundaries: his/her location signals "the intense desire to go on trespassing, transgressing" (1994: 36). She explains that "the nomadic subject … is not altogether devoid of unity; his/her mode is one of definite, seasonal patterns *through rather fixed routes*" (Braidotti, 1994: 11, emphasis added). Braidotti's conceptualization of the nomad also provides a productive framework for considering Buñuel's position as an auteur within Mexican commercial cinema. The director worked within the constraints of its studio system, but also often against them. As Peter Evans has written, Buñuel's location within Mexico resembled that of the German émigré Douglas Sirk in Hollywood, in that they both gently subverted and ironized generic codes of their respective studio systems (1995: 37). Buñuel had earlier

familiarized himself with the rigid conventions of genre during his first trip to Hollywood in 1930, when he worked for MGM for six months. He describes how during his frequent periods of idleness at the studio he created a "synoptic table" of American cinema, composed of movable columns which each represented different settings, historical periods, and stock characters (Buñuel, 1994: 132). His aim was to expose the extent to which Hollywood cinema was "composed along such precise and standardised lines" that, thanks to his system, "anyone could predict the basic plot of a film simply by lining up a given setting with a particular era, ambience, and character" (Buñuel, 1994: 132). Buñuel would later learn how to negotiate the same precise and standardized lines of Mexican commercial cinema, working within the popular genres of the musical melodrama (*Gran casino*, aka *En el viejo Tampico* [Magnificent Casino], 1947), the family melodrama (*Susana*, aka *Carne y demonio* [Susana, aka The Devil and the Flesh], 1950; *Una mujer sin amor* [A Woman Without Love], 1952), and, for the purposes of this chapter, the social comedy (*El gran calavera*, *Subida al cielo*, *La ilusión viaja en tranvía*). His negotiation of the dominant laws of genre thus chimes with the discursive motion of the nomadic subject who, as Braidotti reminds us, similarly moves both within and against, and, therefore, through rather fixed routes.

Braidotti's notion of the nomad brings to mind Michel de Certeau's notion of the tactic, which refers to everyday practices of individuals who navigate their way through spaces of power, or reappropriate materials at hand in order to make them personally useful. De Certeau famously describes the tactic as the "art of the powerless" – an art that requires a guileful and resourceful movement through spaces that are not their own but "organised by a foreign power" (1984: 37). Thus, tactical movements "circulate, come and go, overflow and drift over an imposed terrain" (1984: 34). Crucially, this movement is productive: it provides a means of reappropriating space, investing it with new meanings, recreating it anew. Like Braidotti, Certeau therefore articulates resistance and transgression in a spatial vocabulary which, in particular, conveys a recurring concern with borderlines: his descriptions of tactics are peppered with words such as "overflow," "drift over," "insinuate," "cracks," "cross-cut" – all of which invoke the image of passing *within* and *through* boundaries. Tactical movement is therefore *errant* movement – one that pursues "indeterminate trajectories" (1984: 34), or "wandering lines [*lignes d'erre*]" (1984: xviii) across a space where one does not belong. Buñuel's art similarly conveys tactical movement: not only did his filmmaking frequently err from the fixed industrial routes of generic laws, but his career itself forged an errant geographical path from his homeland to France, the United States, and Mexico. As Acevedo-Muñoz has noted, the director treats the 37 years that he spent in Mexico (which he confines to a mere 20 pages) as a "detour" in his autobiography (2003: 55), an accidental home where he wasn't meant to be. But crucially, errant movement not only crosses boundaries, but illuminates the contours of the boundaries themselves. Braidotti writes that "nomadism … is not fluidity without borders but rather an acute awareness of the nonfixity of boundaries" (1994: 36). Correspondingly, the trope of transgressive movement in

Buñuel's films similarly sheds light on the central norms of Mexican society of the 1940s and 1950s; it exposes the ways in which the dominant social, ideological, and spatial structures delineate, sustain, and naturalize themselves.

Errant movement found its ideal expression in the visual language of many of Buñuel's Mexican films, where he enthusiastically embraced the techniques of the continuity style of filmmaking which had dominated Mexico's Golden Age cinema until this time.[1] On his experience of directing *El gran calavera*, Buñuel recalls: "I found it fun because it trained me technically. I had fun with the editing, creating the structure, and the camera angles" (cited in Sánchez Vidal, 2004: 33, my translation). Sánchez Vidal and others observe that *El gran calavera*, his second Mexican film, exhibits a more confident familiarity with the continuity style than *Gran casino* where "the camera constantly moves, following the movement of the characters and unifying various shots which are conceived in the script as independent" (2004: 34, my translation). Indeed, the noticeably fluid movement of the frame, facilitated by tracking shots and dolly shots, smoothly accommodates and foregrounds movement within the frame. Spatial unity is mostly respected (as Acevedo-Muñoz has observed, Buñuel has commented that he deliberately violated the formal convention of the 180 degree rule in *Gran casino*; 2003: 50), thereby registering the shifting configurations of actors within a group, and underscoring the relationship between character and environment. Moreover, the gestural physicality of some of the comedic performances (Fernando Soler as the drunken Don Ramiro in *El gran calavera*, for instance), mostly held in a long or medium-long shots, not only arguably bears the influence of the silent films of Buster Keaton and Harry Langdon which so fascinated Buñuel (Evans and Santaolalla, 2004: 2), but also reinforces the fluid orchestration of movement across space.

Like de Certeau's tactics, movement – both within the frame and of the frame – in Buñuel's films is often productive. As a distanced observer of both Mexico and its national cinema, Buñuel was able to reconstruct reality with new eyes. As has frequently been noted of Buñuel and other exiled directors, such as Billy Wilder, William Wyler, and Joseph Losey, his status as an uprooted outsider afforded him an acute insight into the structures of his host country's life. As Braidotti reminds us, "the nomad has a sharpened sense of territory but no possessiveness about it" (1994: 36). Located as he was at the margins of the Mexican film industry, Buñuel's films perceptively revealed the social anxieties which were symbolically central to Mexico during the late 1940s and 1950s. Under the *sexenio* (six-year term of office) of Miguel Alemán Valdés, Mexico was poised to undergo a series of profound changes which ushered in its so-called miracle years, a period of accelerated economic growth. During this period, Mexico repositioned itself as an industrialist, free market economy, one that would mark a sharp departure from the utopian dream of agrarian reform which had been central to the post-revolutionary vision of Lázaro Cárdenas del Río. Significantly, within this immediate social and political context, the trope of movement acquired particular symbolic weight. New structures of mobility would be integral to the Mexican miracle – a fact that was most

literally borne out by the well-documented exodus of hundreds of thousands of rural migrants, who sought a new life in the city. Mexico and America would become not only economically closer, but physically closer too, as Alemán Valdés oversaw the completion of the country's segment of the Pan American highway, as well as modernizing its transport system and increasing the number of paved roads (Meyer, Sherman, and Deeds, 2002: 479). Yet this burgeoning movement of capital, goods, and people did not necessarily bring to bear widespread social mobility within the country. In fact, Mexico's new-found wealth became even more unevenly distributed: while the standard of living increased dramatically for the middle classes, material conditions for the poor continued to deteriorate. Movement, then, brought into sharp relief the uneven structures of Alemán's modernization program. As the geographer Tim Cresswell has observed more generally, "mobility is both center and margin – the lifeblood of modernity and the virus that threatens to hasten its downfall" (2006: 21).

Mexico's emerging structure of mobility acquired a distinctly rhythmic shape. As John Tomlinson has observed, the rhythm of acceleration has been "the constant leitmotiv of cultural modernity" (Tomlinson, 2007: 1). Yet during the 1950s this flow of movement was frequently foreclosed as much as it was facilitated – a structure that Tomlinson has observed as typical of modernization, whereby "the impulse to promote speed in one area of life begets the need to regulate, even suppress it in others" (Tomlinson, 2007: 65). The "Green Revolution" in Mexico marked a shift from *ejidos* (communal land) toward large commercial farms, which became enthralled to the rationalized and industrialized rhythms of Fordist-style labor. Ironically, at the same time, many workers in the city adhered to a very different rhythm. As Meyer and colleagues note, the surfeit of migrants that had fled to the cities were ordered under Ruiz Cortines to use hand labor rather than machinery on public works, just so as to keep the new workforce occupied (Meyer, Sherman, and Deeds, 2002: 483). Thus, although accelerated, the growth of its economy was out of synch with the rate of its rapidly expanding population, which placed the country's resources under great strain. As such, the Mexican miracle did not bring to bear so much a faster pace of life, but rather a multiplicity of distinctive and contradictory rhythms. Modernization and its discontents participated in the production of colliding rhythms of flow and fixity, where its uneven effects were played out across different constructions of space and time.

According to Braidotti, the nomad is as attuned to different structures of temporality as it is to spatiality. The nomadic subject, she writes, "is a cohesion engendered by repetitions, cyclical moves, rhythmical displacement" (Braidotti, 1994: 22). Buñuel's exotopic gaze similarly recognized the disruptive potential of the asynchronous, as well as that which was out of place: like errant movement, deviant or dissonant rhythms in *El gran calavera*, *Subida al cielo*, and *La ilusión viaja en tranvía* have a disruptive function. De Certeau writes that tactics survive "on a clever *utilization of time*, of the opportunities it presents and also of the play that it introduces into the foundations of power" (1984: 38–39). Irregular rhythms in

these films similarly play a tactical role: not only do they provide a useful means of exploring the interplay between the temporal and the spatial, but they also momentarily interrupt the foundations of power. These breaks with temporality challenge the dominant structures of spatiality, both at once revealing space as a social practice, and contesting the ideological processes which inhere in its making. More specifically, they serve to disrupt the implacably smooth pace of economic progress that was central to rhetoric of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (Institutional Revolutionary Party). Far from rational, territorialized, and measured, the emerging spaces of Mexican modernization are presented as unstable and ambivalent, orchestrated through a conflicting ebb and flow of rhythms and movements.

Rhythm and movement are integral to the humor of *El gran calavera*. Its title refers to the reckless "madcap" nature of Ramiro (played by the veteran Mexican actor, Fernando Soler), a dissolute businessman who, unable to come to terms with the death of his wife, is squandering his diminishing wealth on drinking and the whimsical demands of his materialistic family. A remake of the Spanish film *Don Quintín el amargo* (Don Quintin the Bitter, 1935), which Buñuel produced for the Spanish studio Filmófono in 1935, the "calavera" of the later version has particular cultural resonances with Mexico, where the word can also refer to the artistic representations of skulls and humorous poems that are associated with the festival of the Day of the Dead. Although the festival plays no part in the film, its narrative nevertheless hinges on a series of scenarios which conform to Bakhtin's writing on the carnivalesque, where the dominant social order is momentarily turned upside down through acts of dissimulation, role-playing, and masquerade. In particular, the carnivalesque is played out in specifically spatial terms: the characters move within social milieux that would otherwise be foreclosed to them, creating a disorder which Octavio Paz describes as typical of the Mexican fiesta, where "everybody forgets himself and enters into otherwise forbidden situations and places" (1985: 52). Thus, in an attempt to teach Ramiro a lesson for his dissolute ways, Gregorio (Francisco Jambrina), his psychologist brother, relocates the family to a down-at-heel neighborhood where he leads the drunken Ramiro to believe that he has lost his entire fortune. Yet when Ramiro, now sober, finds out about their deception, he decides to get revenge by pretending to his family that he really has lost all his money on the stock market, and thus makes them work for a living. This transgression of socially sanctioned places, where the rich live among the poor and the servants live like their masters, thus provides much of the farcical humor of the film. The theme of dislocation is most sensuously enacted in the film's *mise en abime*-style opening shot, where a tight medium shot shows a tangle of different men's legs asleep in a prison cell; as the camera tilts upwards, Ramiro drunkenly mistakes one of their feet for his own.[2]

The *mise en scène* of Ramiro's family home is fairly typical of the representations of bourgeois mansions in Mexican cinema of the period, where, according to Gustavo García, luxury is an expression of dehumanization (1993: 156). The house

is an exhibition of wealth and abundance, where the textures of soft upholstery and the curved and composed forms of neoclassicism abound. Much of the action takes place around its ornate spiral staircase which fans out onto the palatial hallway, creating a theatrical space of open depth. While the hallway serves as a site of public display and social conflict, the stairs lead to the individual quarters of Ramiro's children Virginia (Rosario Granados) and Eduardo (Gustavo Rojo), and his brother and sister-in-law, Ladislao (Andrés Soler) and Milagros (Maruja Grifell), which can be reached through a series of proscenium arches. Significantly, it is within this private upper space that we are first introduced to each member of the family, as they leave their respective bedrooms to greet Ramiro and make their demands. From the outset, the family is presented not so much as a cohesive unit, but as an atomized group of individuals, whose movement appears to be motivated solely by the easy money and unbridled generosity of Ramiro, their ineffectual patriarch. Ramiro commands little spatial mastery over his house and office: the servants appear to have abandoned their own quarters to play cards in the hallway, and his male servant regularly smokes Ramiro's cigars; his employees take long breaks at their own leisure. The rhythms of his family and colleagues are marked by their wastefulness and irregularity. Indeed, Milagros, who adheres to a strict regime of pills, medicines, and injections at set times each evening, is the sole member of his family whose behavior is structured around routine. (Ironically, her addiction to prescription drugs is brought about by her inactive lifestyle, and thus the very absence of rhythm.) Ramiro's pace of frenetic recklessness (Gregorio in an early sequence refers to him as "un calavera desfrenado" ["a madcap out of control"]) threatens to throw his business into bankruptcy. This is compounded when, much against the prudent advice of his assistant, he attempts to speculate on mining shares. Ramiro's decadence would appear to run counter to the economic vision of Alemán, who according to Jeffrey Pilcher, "employed banks, taxes and tariffs to direct income towards investment in the belief that by forgoing mass consumption for a generation, Mexico could build the economic base needed for a modern economy" (2001: 131). In contrast, Ramiro appears to represent an unfettered and unsustainable capitalism of excess – one that the film's moral narrative trajectory, like Alemán's economic policies, endeavors to discipline and contain.

Ramiro and his family are most clearly disciplined during their stay in the humble *vecindad* (neighborhood). As Milagros first sees the building where they are about to stay, she exclaims: "¡Qué ordinario, qué vulgar!" ("How terribly common and vulgar!"). In contrast to their mansion, the building is first presented as a communal and democratic space of social interaction: each dwelling is reached through an open corridor, and organized around a large public patio, where children play and neighbors meet to gossip and do their washing at the well. Inside, Gregorio swiftly allocates each member a work station within their apartment, where they reluctantly carry out their work; thus, Milagros is made to sew, Eduardo shine shoes, Virginia iron, and Ladislao do carpentry. Their unproductive pace of work is soon set in counterpoint with that of Pablo (Rubén Rojo), a helpful and handsome

neighbor, who has yet to discover that Ramiro's family are wealthy people in disguise. Hardworking and humble, Pablo is positioned as the moral center of the film. As well as repairing radios, Pablo earns a living from making regular announcements from his van, from which he advertises various household products from ham to stockings to the accompaniment of a soundtrack of mambo songs. Indeed, Pablo is the embodiment of the ideal Mexican citizen under Alemánismo: his mobile entrepreneurialism is coupled with a paternalistic sense of social duty, where in an attempt to elevate the family from their supposed poverty, he regularly brings them laundry to wash from the neighborhood, as well as chairs to repair. Through the aid of Pablo, then, Ramiro's family soon succumb to the routine movement and everyday rhythms of working Mexicans. These rhythmic shifts are most clearly articulated through the site of the body: no longer idle and sedate bodies of consumption, they are transformed into healthy bodies of regular production – a transformation which has a clear benefit for the social and emotional wellbeing of Milagros, who swiftly abandons her regime of prescription drugs. Pablo's values also bring the family together as a cohesive whole, where, unlike the earlier scenes in the mansion, the family is frequently framed together within one space. Indeed, Don Ramiro says during a meal: "antes, vivimos tan desunidos, egoistas … Gracias a la pobreza ahora sabemos lo que es un verdadero lugar" ("before, we were living like strangers and selfish … Thanks to poverty we now know the value of a real home"). The family soon enough return to the mansion, but bring with them the values that they have learnt, as Ladislao resolves to open a furniture factory, Milagros bakes bread instead of buying it in, and Eduardo decides to go to university. Thus, the momentary upsetting of the social spaces provides a means of negotiating the excesses of the Mexican Miracle. The regulatory and productive rhythms of labor serve to discipline Ramiro and his family, thereby creating a modern Mexico where rich and poor are in synchronous harmony with each other for the good of society.

While *El gran calavera* centers on those who reap the rewards of the Mexican miracle, *Subida al cielo* is chiefly focalized through a struggling rural family, living in the tropical and mountainous state of Guerrero. The film opens with the marriage of Oliverio (Esteban Márquez) and Albina (Carmen González), whose wedding night is abruptly interrupted by the news that Elisa, Oliverio's mother (Batriz Ramos), is gravely ill. Summoned to the family home, the mother tells Oliverio that she wants to bequeath her house to her grandson, Chuchito, in the memory of the latter's mother, who died giving birth to him. So as to stop his two greedy brothers, Felipe (Víctor Pérez) and Juan (played by Roberto Cobo, who famously plays El Jaibo in *Los ovidados* [The Forgotten Ones, aka The Young and the Damned], 1950), gaining control of the house first, Oliverio sets off on a meandering bus journey to find a lawyer that will draw up a will. Considerably more loose-knit than *El gran calavera*, the film's narrative arc follows the strange logic of a dream, where the onward movement of the journey is constantly intercepted by obstacles, or complicated by unexpected or downright bizarre turns of events.

The errant movement of the bus literally drives the film onward: the traveling itself is the central focus of the narrative rather than the destination, while Oliverio is but a passive agent, carried along helplessly by its desultory path. The mobile frame allows for a spatial exploration of the surrounding tropical landscape, which is registered through the several traveling shots during the film. While the rural spaces of Guerrero dominate the *mise en scène*, the city looms large in the imagination of its inhabitants. Albina says she regrets that the wedding ceremony did not take place in the city, and Oliverio's mother's dying wish is that Chuchito go to a school in the capital and "que sea alguien" (that he become somebody). Indeed, it is her desire that the youngest generation of her family should migrate to the city that provides the impetus for the journey. Thus, the city serves as a structuring absence in the film: it is a site of the imagination which drives the desires and dreams of its characters, but which forever lies beyond their grasp.

But while the lure of modernization offers exciting new opportunities and freedom, it is also a source of great anxiety. This tension is played out through the autonomous and free movement of Raquel, a fellow passenger on the bus, whose low-cut, revealing clothes connect her with urban modernity and the sexualized aesthetics of the *cabaretera* genre.[3] Like the titular protagonist of Buñuel's steamy melodrama, *Susana* (1951), Raquel is both dangerously out of place and out of synch with her rural environment. This is clearly enacted in an early scene, where Oliverio, losing his patience with the bus driver, says "si yo fuera el chofer …" ("If I were the driver …"), to which Raquel interjects "nos estrellabas … mira tú a las curvas, y tú en ellas siempre te distancias" ("you'd crash … Look at those curves, you always lose control there"). The scene brusquely cross-cuts to an external shot, where a camera mounted on the exterior of the moving bus captures the bumpy road ahead, as the vehicle snakes violently from side to side. A following shot shows Raquel once more, as she stands up and provocatively moves her undulating hips in Oliverio's direction. The editing graphically conflates the movement of the bus with that of Raquel: like the bus, her movement forges an unsteady and dangerous path. According to Octavio Paz, Mexican culture has traditionally conceptualized the *mala mujer* (the bad woman) in terms of her autonomous and unbounded movement: "[the *mala mujer*] is not passive like the 'self-denying mother', the 'waiting sweetheart', the hermetic idol: she comes and goes, she looks for men and then leaves them. Her extreme mobility … renders her invulnerable. Activity and immodesty unite to petrify her soul" (1985: 39). Similarly, Raquel's transgressive sexuality is clearly foregrounded through her movement. As Connelly and Lynd have observed, unlike her fellow passengers, Raquel's reasons for traveling to Petatlán are never disclosed in the film (2001: 242). Not only is she mobile, but her mobility is of a specifically errant and elusive nature – one that has no fixed route, and whose sole purpose appears to be to destabilize the traditional social structures that are upheld in the film. As Connelly and Lynd note, in one scene she even compares herself to slippery oil (2001: 242) – a black lubricant that eases movement, but that also ignites into flames which destroy whatever lies

in its path. Indeed, Raquel makes several allusions to fire: in an early scene, she asks Oliverio to extinguish a match; in another, she coquettishly warns him "no te quemes" ("don't get burnt") as he seeks help from Eliza, another passenger on the bus. The figure of Raquel is placed in Manichean contrast with Albina, who embodies the archetype of the nurturing and redeeming woman. As Connelly and Lynd have observed, her name is derived from "alba," which means "dawn" (2001: 243). Unlike Raquel, Albina is associated with the bucolic and static open spaces of the countryside which open the film. Her name connotes the eternal and circadian rhythms of nature, where the harmonious cycle of night and day are set in contrast with the impetuous rhythms of interruption with which Raquel is associated.

The bus ride, according to Acevedo-Muñoz, symbolizes the bumpy road ahead to modern Mexico (2003: 114), and this is most vividly played out in a scene where the bus gets stuck in a muddy river. As a friendly local farmer attempts to shift the vehicle with his oxen, Don Eladio (Manuel Dondé), a politician who is traveling on the bus, retorts angrily, "la tracción animal es de los tiempos de las cavernas" ("animal traction is from the cavemen times"), calling them "enemigos del progreso" ("enemies of progress"). Moments later, Eladio reappears on the back of a tractor, whose driver he attempts to control by shouting and waving his gun around. Sure enough, the tractor begins to sink, while the old-fashioned oxen successfully pull the bus to the other side of the river. Like Alemán, Don Eladio associates mechanical speed with progress. The rhythm of the tractor, which is dictated by the autocratic demands of Eladio, signals the kind of modern agrarianism which Alemán sought to promote – one that was opened up to the enforced time discipline of industrial labor, and that generated a more rationalized productivity. The rhythmic structures that Eladio attempts to imprint on the countryside, however, are symbolically resisted: traditional post-revolutionary agrarian ideals, embodied by the community spirit of the farmer and his slow but steady oxen, turn out to be more efficient. The conflicting rhythms of modernization and tradition, domination and resistance, therefore throw light on the superficial rhetoric of progress on which the Mexican Miracle depended.

Like *Subida al cielo*, the narrative of *La ilusión viaja en tranvía* is similarly structured around the trope of a frustrated journey. The film centers around Juan "Caireles" (Carlos Navarro) and Tobías "Tarrajas" (Fernando Soto), two municipal transit workers who, after discovering that their favorite streetcar, the No. 133, is to be decommissioned, get drunk and take it for one final trip. As in *Subida al cielo*, Lilia Prado plays a modern urban woman who is the unattainable object of *amour fou* in the film, while the principal setting of public transport again provides a folksy emphasis on everyday life, but this time within the urban milieu of Mexico City. On their journey, they encounter diverse sectors of the urban population, from nighttime abattoir workers carrying great hunks of meat to a class of unruly children on a school trip. The vivid tapestry of characters found on public transport was an aspect of Mexican life that fascinated Buñuel, who later commented: "You know that on public transport in

Mexico it's possible, or at least it was at that time, to find people carrying boxes of fruit, or live turkeys, in short: the most incredible things, and that's why it occurred to me have the abattoir workers traveling by streetcar with joints of meat, and elderly pious types with an image of a saint" (in Torrent and Colina, 1993; my translation).

The protagonists' faithful attachment to the vehicle reflects a wider affective structure of nostalgia at play in the film, where the streetcar, which is presented as a democratic and public space of interaction, is threatened by Mexico's embrace of modernization. Indeed, streetcars like the No. 133 were gradually being phased out in Mexico City in the 1950s, which in part was a symptom of the declining public investment in transport at the time. As Levy and Gabriel show, investment in transport fell from 51.6 percent in the early 1940s to a 36.3 percent share of public expenditure under the administration of Adolfo Ruiz Cortines (1952–1958) (1987: 136). As in *Subida al cielo*, an anxiety about modernization finds its symbolic parallel in the figure of the mobile woman, embodied by the actress Lilia Prado. While Juan professes his undying love to her, Lupita is romantically attached to Pablo, a fellow streetcar worker who has abandoned his membership of the union, wears slick designer suits, and, most importantly, has his own car. (In an early sequence, Lupita refuses to marry him until he drives his own car, asking him "¿No hay un Ford en tu futuro?" ["Is there is Ford in your future?"].) For Lupita, Pablo's desirability unequivocally lies in his embrace of bourgeois individualism. He is presented in the film as the standard bearer of unfettered modernization, whose materialism, speed, and free, automobilized movement threaten to erode the civic values of community and egalitarianism that Caireles and Tarrajas seek to keep alive. Pablo's celebration of conspicuous consumption, however, belies the simmering discontent of a city faced with crippling price rises and burgeoning social inequality. The film's loose, episodic structure gives space to scenes of extended social commentary, providing a window onto a country where the cost of food, clothing, and services had doubled between the years 1949 and 1954 (Meyer, Sherman, and Deeds, 2002: 473). An early scene sees a teacher explain to the night watchman of the tram station that inflation is generating poverty among common people, while later on, Lupita stands at the head of a queue of angry customers outside a shop, who stage a revolt over the rising prices of food. Elsewhere, passengers mistrust the fact that their journey on the streetcar is free. A pious female passenger mutters to her friend, who carries a statue of Jesus, "Y eso de que no admiten dinero, me huele mal. En los tiempos que corren, nadie da nada de balde" ("The fact that it's free seems pretty fishy. Nowadays, nobody gives away anything for free"), while an American tourist exclaims "¡Me huele a comunismo!" ("Smells like communism to me!").

This focus on the everyday is first established in the film's opening sequence, where a montage of images of Mexico City portray life in the metropolis as bustling and anonymous. Establishing shots of its high-rise buildings, busy roads, and

streetcars are accompanied by the diegetic sound of cacophonous horns, while an omniscient narrator sets the stage for the story to come: "Mexico, gran ciudad como tantas del mundo, es teatro de los más variados y desconcertantes sucesos que no son sino las pulsaciones de su diario vivir … millones de hombres y mujeres prensan hora tras hora sus historias fugaces y sencillas" ("Mexico, one of the great cities of the world, is the setting of the most varied and puzzling events that are the pulse of its daily life …. Millions of men and women write, hour after hour, fleeting and simple stories"). From the start, the social space of Mexico City is invoked from the bottom up: urban life is focalized from the perspective of its ordinary workers, whose everyday narratives are woven imperceptibly into the anonymous textures of the city. Again, time reveals itself as an integral component of the everyday, as the narrator marks out the rhythmic shape of their lives, alerting us to the "pulse" of their routines, and their brief and "fleeting" stories. The stories that these people tell, or "prensan" (translated literally as "press," or perhaps "inscribe," but as "write" in the English subtitles of the film) evoke the writing of de Certeau, who describes tactical movement as pertaining to the "the ordinary practitioners of the city (who) live 'down below', below the thresholds at which visibility begins [….] they are walkers, *Wandersmänner*, whose bodies follow the thicks and thins of an urban 'text' they write without being able to read it" (1984: 93). In foregrounding the relationship between walking and writing, de Certeau argues for the creative potential of movement. In commandeering the streetcar at night, and offering to drive it to wherever passengers choose, Juan and Tarrajas similarly convey tactical movement. Throughout the film, the No. 133 streetcar thus follows a series of irregular routes – or, to follow the writing of de Certeau more closely, "wandering lines [*lignes d'erre*]" (1984: xviii) – across parts of the city where the vehicle does not usually belong. In doing so, the streetcar brings together various diverse sectors of the city's population whose errant movement, in turn, allows them to tell the stories of their everyday life through the routes they choose.

If the commandeered streetcar finds itself out of place, it is also out of synch with the dominant rhythms of city. Its movement, as well as that of the passengers it transports, represents a break with uniform time: timetabled and organized rhythms, which frame and define the flow of urban life, are momentarily disrupted and overturned. In the final sequence, the protagonists are captured in a valedictory extreme long shot, as the narrator concludes in his condescending manner: "Este fue el cuento, sin relieve para algunos, ignorado por la mayoria, pero inolvidable a sus protagonists que de nuevo vuelven al ritmo cotidiano y sencillo de sus vidas" ("This was the story. For some, uneventful. Ignored by the majority, but memorable to its stars who return to the simple daily rhythm of their lives"). Like movement, then, rhythm provides a means of social resistance in the film. It momentarily allows the passengers to mark out their own tempo, asserting their visibility within the anonymous mass of the modern city.

Conclusion

As an outsider in the Mexican studio system, Buñuel moved both within and against, and *through* fixed geographical and industrial routes. As I have shown, the director's errant movement finds its symbolic parallel in the films *El gran calavera*, *Subida al cielo*, and *La ilusión viaja en tranvía*, where movement repeatedly transgresses socially sanctioned spaces and rhythm interrupts foundations of power. These errant movements and rhythms illustrate Braidotti's "nonfixity of boundaries" (1994: 36) and contribute toward an understanding of the politics of transgression which were at play in Buñuel's Mexican social comedies. More specifically, they illuminate and critique the emerging structures of mobility which were the very lifeblood of the Mexican Miracle in the 1940 and the 1950s. As such, Buñuel's acute and nuanced awareness of movement and rhythm serve to illuminate the practices of everyday life in Mexico – practices which, as we have seen, were largely out of place and synch with the modernized vision of the nation that the Partido Revolucionario Institucional endeavored to project.

Notes

1 "Golden Age" or "Época de oro de cine mexicano" describes the films made by the Mexican studio system when it reached its artistic and commercial peak, from the 1930s to the early 1950s.
2 This image was not in the original screenplay of the film, but was apparently conceived by Buñuel during the making of the film (Torrent and Colina, 1993: 48).
3 The *cabaretera* genre, which emerged in late 1940s, focused much of its action on the space of the cabaret. A hybrid of melodrama, musical, and thriller, the *cabaretera* film signaled a shift in emphasis from rural to urban spaces, and articulated the contradictions of a rapidly developing Mexico.

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11

Susana

Melodrama and the Voluptuosity of Destruction

María Pilar Rodríguez

In 1945 Luis Buñuel wrote a letter from Hollywood to his friend Gustavo Pittalunga with a view to engaging him as a new member of his film team. In his greeting, Buñuel asked him the following questions: "What are you up to? What do you do to survive and what do you do to endure?"[1] (cited in Sánchez Vidal, 1988: 305). This way of differentiating between tasks associated with nourishment (those impelled by necessity and which are condemned to oblivion) and others of an artistic nature (ones that endure in our memory and history) seems to apply in the films of Buñuel, both as regards his own conception of art and the critical treatment that his films have received until now. The case of *Susana*, aka *Carne y demonio* (Susana, aka The Devil and the Flesh, 1951), the film directed in Mexico by Luis Buñuel in 1950, seems to fit in the first category, being a film he was commissioned to make. It was promoted by Fernando Soler, one of the most representative actors, writers, and directors of Mexican film, who first showed Buñuel the project in which Soler himself was to take the leading role. It was to be produced by Sergio Kogan, the manager of Columbia Pictures Company in Mexico. Buñuel was not only obliged to take up a project construed in the Mexican film industry's most conventional and traditional parameters[2] (as described in detail by Amparo Martínez Herranz [2007: 119]) but was also to direct a project by Kogan which had been designed to further and promote the career of his young wife, Rosita Quintana. The aim of this chapter is to explore the validity of *Susana* as a lasting artistic production despite the limitations imposed by all these external conditions. If Buñuel was not fully satisfied with the final product, since he feared – without sound reason, as we shall see – that it could be taken too seriously or too literally, it did not prevent him from bestowing certain value on the film, albeit granting that acknowledgment to

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others rather than to himself: "It could have been alright, but I spoilt the end because it seems too much in earnest. It could have been quite a good film and according to some it is"[3] (cited in Aub, 1985: 119).

The aim of this chapter is to explore the artistic value of the film by way of an approach to the theory of melodrama and certain surrealistic elements that are present in its structure and composition. The particular use of melodramatic techniques to arouse emotion is combined with typical surrealist elements frequently employed by Buñuel, resulting in an artistic original product characterized by the interaction of such elements. As pointed out by Víctor Fuentes, all Buñuel's film production, over and above the unleashing of passions, shares with melodrama "the unexpected turns, the chance meetings, the polar switches within characters, the abrupt changes in the plot, especially in the *dénouements*, and, above all, in the leading role given to surprise and chance as cohesive elements for plot development, in contrast with the psychological or realistic motivation of conventional narrative cinema"[4] (Fuentes, 2000: 76). The title of this chapter refers to the subversion of standard behavior that *Susana* stands for in terms of the power of desire, the manner in which melodrama becomes a vehicle of extraordinary strength for the projection of a message based on the voluptuosity of destruction, as conceptualized by the Marquis de Sade and adopted by Buñuel as of his early film productions (Martínez Herranz, 2007: 135). There are already several studies – including those of Martínez Herranz (2007) and Ernesto Acevedo-Muñoz (2003) – that have analyzed the film in depth in the context of melodrama and the varieties it offers in the Mexican context (the *comedia ranchera*, *cabaretera* films, the *revolutionary* melodrama, and the *family* melodrama). Taking these genres as a basis, this chapter deploys the theoretical model of classical melodrama in Hollywood cinema of the 1940s – and, even more so, that of the 1950s – in order to delineate criteria for the analysis and investigation of Luis Buñuel's recurring obsession for passionate desire in its most radical and savage expression with regard to the seductive powers of the main character. The function of melodrama in this decade, as noted by Laura Mulvey, is irrevocably linked to the family context and is centered on aspects associated with sexual repression and desire: "This is the function of 50s melodrama. It works by touching on sensitive areas of sexual repression and frustration; its excitement comes from conflict not between enemies, but between people tied by blood or love" (Mulvey, 1987: 75).

The plot of *Susana* is quite simple: the film starts by showing us the heroine being dragged along the ground to a punishment cell in the reformatory where she has been interned, until she manages to escape during a storm. The following scene takes us to the ranch of don Guadalupe, his wife doña Carmen, and their 18-year-old son Alberto. Other characters on the ranch are the maid Felisa and the ranch foreman Jesús. Susana is taken in by the family and thereafter we witness how the presence of Susana affects, excites, and disturbs all the men on the ranch until it finally causes the destruction of the idyllic family normative structure that had existed before. Susana is finally sent back to the reformatory

and the family regains its former peace as if nothing whatsoever had happened. The film by Buñuel admirably combines his need to show surrealist themes associated with passion, desire, and the recurrence of the repressed with the typical melodramatic elements of classical Hollywood film adapted to the context of the Mexican patriarchal family. Throughout the film male desire is openly aroused and the female body is displayed as an irresistible force which characters try to repress, to no avail. Progressively the film will portray the recurrence of erotic drives in male characters, and the appearance of violent and punishing urges in female characters toward the end, when the placid and benevolent mother is transformed in a vengeful monster, physically beating Susana in a most remarkable scene of surrealist overtones, as will be analyzed. Nevertheless, the surrealist undercurrent in the film must be connected with Buñuel's desire for revolution brought on by scandal. This meant leveling constant hostility toward the hypocrisy and morality practiced by the institutions. As Buñuel himself noted, "the real purpose of surrealism was not to create a new literary, artistic, or even philosophical movement, but to explode the social order, to transform life itself" (Buñuel, 1996: 107). Therefore the final scenes of *Susana* will be analyzed from the perspective of such surrealist attempt to subvert established patterns regarding the patriarchal Mexican family and the normative religious conventions.

However, the real dramatic structure which underlies the narrative and visual organization of the film is that of the melodrama, as practiced by classical Hollywood cinematography, in this case adapted to the Mexican context. To explain melodrama theoretical construction the works by Christine Gledhill, Stanley Cavell, and Mary Ann Doane will be explored. Gledhill in particular provides a most fitting description of classical melodrama which, in a very different filmic and sociopolitical context, may nevertheless be aptly applied to Buñuel's film. As Gledhill explains, melodrama is often centered on conflicts to the intrusion of a sexual character in the domestic spaces of the family. She notes that melodrama's exposure of masculinity's contradictions poses a threat to the unity of the patriarchal narrative text (Gledhill, 1987: 10). *Susana* begins by the physical intrusion of the young female protagonist, characterized by an extreme sexual presence, into the domestic space of the patriarchal ranch. What *Susana* stands for, as occurs in classical melodrama – and as Buñuel underlines in all his films – is the repression of instinct at the hands of bourgeois morals and traditional family order, and especially the weak network of norms and principles based on normative values. The young female protagonist will act as a catalyst to reveal the hidden contradictions of the normative values of Mexican culture and social organization. As Gledhill points out, "for melodrama, working less towards the release of individual repression than towards the public enactment of socially unacknowledged states, the family is a means, not an end" (Gledhill, 1987: 31). The narrative thread of the film accurately follows the pattern of the classical melodrama as proposed by Gledhill; although the context and the circumstances

are necessarily adapted to the Mexican situation, the premises of the melodramatic structure are maintained, as described by Gledhill:

> Characteristically the melodramatic plot turns on an initial, often deliberately engineered, misrecognition of the innocence of a central protagonist. By definition the innocent cannot use the powers available to the villain; following the dictates of their nature, they must become victims, a position legitimated by a range of devices which rationalize their apparent inaction in their own behalf. Narrative is then progressed through a struggle for clear moral identification of all protagonists and is finally resolved by public recognition of where guilt and innocence really lie. (Gledhill, 1987: 30)

The early scenes in the film place us squarely in the coordinates, atmosphere, themes, motives, and symbols of melodrama as formulated by Gledhill and characterized by excess: "Melodrama's recourse to gestural, visual and musical excess constitutes the expressive means of what Brooks calls the text of muteness" (Gledhill, 1987: 30). Indeed, the visual and sound effects are coordinated in an extraordinarily effective way to create a gothic atmosphere in which the main themes developed in the film are present. The impression created by the storm, in terms of thunder, lightning, and torrential rain, is reinforced by the diegetic sounds of the elements of furious nature. A notice appears bearing the words: "State Reformatory" and the physical appearance of Susana, the heroine, dragged along the ground by three female guards (who can barely hold her down) is preceded by her wild screams. As Cavell says, "in the comedies the past is open, shared, a recurring topic of fun, no doubt somewhat ambiguous; but in melodramas the past is frozen, mysterious, with topics forbidden and isolating" (Cavell, 1996: 6). Indeed, about Susana we discover from the words of one of her guards that she has been held in the reformatory for two years, and "is no more reformed than she was on the first day." But we know nothing about her former life nor the reasons that led to her internment. Her age – about 20 – also seems somewhat disconcerting as regards her internment (halfway between freedom and a prison, a fully penal institution) and all these elements reinforce the film's mysterious air, as do the forbidden and unknown themes involved. As soon as Susana is forcefully introduced into the cell, the gothic element – hitherto heightened by internment and the store – increases by way of the presence of bats, rats, and spiders. The effect is further boosted by the shadow of a cross which is projected onto the floor from the window. Susana kneels on the cross and begs: "God, you created me as I am. I have as much right as a viper or that spider there. Have mercy on me; work a miracle, if you can, and get me out of here." The miracle, indeed, occurs and the girl manages to escape through the window and cross over the reformatory's wire fence. The number three is of great symbolic value throughout the film: there are three prison guards who can barely control Susana and three are the men she will seduce, although all three are equally unable to master her; at the end of the film,

there will also be three male officers who come to lead her back to the reformatory. In the film, which is riddled with religious references, the trinity is constructed as a formula and as a symbolic number not only as regards the plot, but also in its visual and formal structure. Furthermore, the identification of the heroine with a viper and with the sexual and moral connotations that this term implies, is constant. Finally, although a divine miracle seems to enable her to escape, the immediate association with the devil in all its forms will continue to be present periodically in the film. From the very outset, we have a succession of unexpected developments and turns of fortune that are typical of melodrama, from Susana's unexpected and miraculous escape at the beginning to her enforced return at the end. As Gledhill states, "the spectacle, moral polarization and dramatic reversals for which melodrama is so often criticized, serves the purpose of clarification, identification and palpable demonstration of repressed 'ethical and psychic forces', which nevertheless constitute compelling narratives" (Gledhill, 1987: 30). As regards the moral dichotomy associated with melodrama, here it is clear that Susana will from now on become the devil who has taken on the form of a woman's body. No one will remain immune to her voluptuous power of seduction until she achieves the destruction of all that is morally acceptable and fully reveals the repression of instinct, desire, and fear that had until then been experienced by those living in the protective environment of the ranch.

From her first appearance on screen, Susana – demon and flesh, or demon transformed into flesh – takes on the form of a body marked by voluptuousness; as Martínez Herranz identifies with regard to Rosita Quintana, "this actress of Argentine origin started up her film career in 1948, a career which was to be marked by her voluptuous beauty"[5] (Martínez Herranz, 2007: 120). Indeed, that same year she was to star in the film *Mala hembra* (Bad Woman, 1952), and she was regularly given the role of devilish sensual female protagonist in such films as *Tú sólo tú* (You Only You, 1950) and *Tres melodías de amor* (Three Love Melodies, 1955), among others. This was so much the case that Buñuel, in the film's technical script, jots down little more than a couple of notes to describe this character who is the prototype of sensuality. Her basic role is to arouse desire in all the men she meets. Even before her arrival at the ranch, the maid Felisa repeatedly announces the forthcoming appearance of the devil or a demon: "I have a feeling that the devil is on the loose, and may the Holy Trinity forgive me." When Susana's face appears at the window and is contemplated by the family members as a kind of supernatural apparition, she has no doubts about it and proclaims: "It is the devil." The three men (there is no need to dwell on the religious connotations behind the names chosen for the landlord, don Guadalupe, and the foreman, Jesús) are the ones who see that the unconscious, drenched, and half-naked young woman is introduced into the house. We are immediately given close-ups of each of their faces as the first shades of desire become visible. Doña Carmen decides that she must speak with Susana herself and sends the men away, perhaps from the very start unconsciously aware of Susana's potential danger. On attempting to find out about

her past, the reluctance which melodrama shows to reveal any meaningful data – as observed by Cavell – once again comes to the fore. The young woman says she does not know her surname. She claims never to have met her parents. Her gestures and words lead one to believe that she is inventing or improvising the rest as she goes along. As Acevedo-Muñoz states, the young woman behaves in a different way with each of the characters she interacts with (Acevedo-Muñoz, 2003: 86). Initially, at least, this allows her to maintain a certain degree of ambiguity regarding her intentions and to play the role of the innocent in the way previously described by Gledhill as characteristic of melodrama. Doña Carmen describes her as "good, work-loving, humble, innocent," on the basis of the attentive attitude and the sweet obedient tone Susana adopts to speak to her. As of that moment, the bucolic and idyllic family life on the ranch is severely disrupted by the presence of the young woman. In this sense, Michael Wood's comments on male and female desire in the films of Buñuel are particularly relevant; without denying the fact that both male and female desire exist in his films, he nonetheless believes that, more than real women, what we perceive in them are the specters of what men would like women to be, or maybe, what they fear they might be. He concludes with the question: "Do the male characters in *Susana* ever see Susana, or is she only the shimmering form of their appetite?" (Wood, 2004: 531).

The structure of the film is marked by episodes that harp on the destructive effect that Susana's voluptuousness exerts on the three men. Such is the strength of the immediate desire her presence arouses that, even from the early scenes, it is clear that *all men* watch her with overt or disguised lust and that *all men* try to possess her. These range from the uncouth trio of farm hands who, once again, try to grab her on the morning after her arrival at the house, to the landowner himself, don Guadalupe, in a much longer and more subtle approach. This reflects a hyperbolic display of male lust brought on by the mere contemplation of the woman's body. As regards Susana – and almost to the very end of the film – she seems to have no other mission than to seduce the three men in the house. To carry out this seductive role she exploits the weapons of her fresh and extraordinary beauty which is backed up by a series of gestures which she repeats mechanically and which consist of displaying her shoulders, stroking her hair, and exploiting different looks and tones of voice to trap her prey. Susana does not hesitate to make a show of herself. But the most interesting thing about her antics is that they are continuous and even chaotic as she chases her victims about. The first part of the film follows Susana as she interacts with the three men – one after another – in such a way that the film structure and composition formally revolves around the number three. It is now centered on revealing the forms male lust adopts in a drastic way while they feast their eyes on the young woman. In this sense Susana behaves as a catalyst for destruction in relation to what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari have termed a "line of flight" associated with the rhizome: "The rhizome is an anti-genealogy, a short memory or anti-memory. The rhizome arises from variation, expansion, conquest, capture, injection"[6] (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994: 26). Indeed, in contrast

with the *long memory* on which don Guadalupe's family pride themselves, based on family, tradition, and civilization, Susana displays her *short memory* which includes forgetting as a process, having no genealogy, nor indeed a past. Its constant movement upsets the strong family root which had been so far considered unalterable.

The public enactment of the arousal of a form of desire that is unknown even to those experiencing it is staged within the family setting, inside and outside the farm. It takes place in the living rooms, bedrooms, dining room, and halls, but also in the barnyards, stables, and courtyards. As occurs in the melodramas analyzed by Mary Ann Doane, "In these films the house becomes the analogue of the human body, its parts fetishised by textual operations, its erotogeneous zones metamorphosised by a morbid anxiety attached to sexuality" (Doane, 1987: 288–289). Indeed, Susana moves around in all these settings, switching continually from one to another, completely mastering the erotic function of each space which she does not hesitate to use to her advantage. Three elements take on special relevance: the staircase, the windows, and the well. The three scenes in which Susana first impacts on each of the three men of the house are defined by the position taken up by the young woman on the stairs. Doane refers to the staircase in the following way: "An icon of crucial and repetitive insistence in the classical representations of the cinema, the staircase is traditionally the locus of specularisation of the woman. It is *on the stairway* that she is displayed as spectacle for the male gaze" (Doane, 1987: 288, emphasis in original). Although the stairways on which Susana is standing have a much more domestic nature than the majestic ones featured in many classical Hollywood films, the notion of specularization is developed on the three occasions with a distinct sexual intention. In the first case, the young woman is with Jesús in the barnyard and climbs a ladder to collect the eggs laid by the chickens. When the man takes her in his arms and presses her against his body, the eggs break and the viscous liquid runs down their thighs. Acevedo-Muñoz provides an apt interpretation of this episode: "The broken eggs suggest a surrogate sexual exchange, not only because the Spanish word for eggs (huevos) is customarily used to name testicles, but because of the way Susana secretly discards the apron with the yolky, slimy, semen-like remains of the encounter before casually returning to her chores" (2003: 87). Although this interpretation is lucid and revealing, perhaps one must suggest that Susana does not casually return to her chores, but rather continues her tireless chase. After taking off her apron, she approaches the windows of Alberto's room. Access to him is still restricted to her in these early scenes; this is visually marked by the conversation they have and the fact that their view of each other is hampered by the window bars that stand between them.

Soon afterward, the camera observes Susana on a ladder cleaning windows; she then uses a small bench to reach another space and continue the housework. The arrival of don Guadalupe causes an encounter of high sexual voltage which is portrayed with a low-angle shot of the young woman. Susana is framed as a vision of great sensuality, with bare feet and shoulders. Don Guadalupe makes an effort

to repress his desire and even scolds her and asks her to wear "less provocative blouses," but his drooling looks leave no doubt about the effect Susana has on him. In a former scene, the effort that the father had to make to hide, repress, and divert the intensity of that desire was evident. For after having initially greeted his wife with a chaste kiss on the forehead, and after a small chat with the young woman after her arrival on the farm, there is a clear instance of transference in which the man returns to his wife and gives her a long and passionate kiss of a very different kind. The surprise felt by doña Carmen is clearly expressed in her response: "What's up with you today, Guadalupe? Why did you kiss me like that?" In this scene in which Susana is exposed to don Guadalupe, he is cleaning his shotguns and repeatedly runs his hand up and down the barrel, in a movement that clearly denotes masturbation and which continues even after Susana leaves. Lastly, and following the triangular structure base on the three men of the house, a new scene now shows Susana on a ladder beside Alberto, who she is helping to place books on a shelf. In contrast to the former scenes in which the young woman's position was slightly above Jesús and don Guadalupe, Susana and Alberto are now on the same rung of the ladder. They hold a conversation of obvious sexual overtones since the picture of a naked man is seen in one of the books and this (apparently) scandalizes the young woman. Alberto takes advantage of the reference to mythology afforded by the picture of the naked man to instruct Susana on the origin of her own name. He tells her it means "chastity." In this explanation we find a significant clue as to the overtly parodic tone that will mark the end of the film. In the words of Martínez Herranz, "the director made this clear by introducing that ambiguity on choosing the name of the heroine, the same one as the chaste wife portrayed in the book of Daniel who defended her honour against the two lustful old men who besieged her both physically and morally"[7] (2007: 136). The author adds that Buñuel was fully aware of his intention when choosing her name because in the technical script he carefully noted down the way in which actress Rosita Quintana was to act here, indicating that "Susana lowers her eyes with the same air of modesty with which her namesake in the Bible must have lowered hers in similar circumstances" (Martínez Herranz, 2007: 136).

The irony that is involved in the young woman's name now becomes more tangible. As soon as Alberto explains its meaning, they both fall off the ladder – there are many instances of the heroine suffering physical falls which to some extent herald her final moral fall – and kiss passionately on the floor until doña Carmen breaks in on the scene. The three scenes successively mark Susana's indiscriminate and uninterrupted exhibition with the three men. The window is another of the special spots favored by melodrama and Buñuel's film. Now it is investigated as a setting for seduction and as an interface or as an interstice between subjects and the positions they take up:

> The last site in this topography of spaces within the home with a pronounced semantic valence in relation to processes of specularisation is the window. The window has

> special import in terms of social and symbolic positioning of the woman – the window is the interface between inside and outside, the feminine space of the family and reproduction of the masculine space of production. It facilitates a communication by means of the look between the two sexually differentiated spaces. (Mulvey, 1987: 288)

The first time Susana shows her face at the house, blurred as it is by the rain, she does so through the windows of the dining room. From this moment on, windows and doors act as transitional settings which either encourage or obstruct the way for the young woman's seductive powers. In these intermediate sequences of the film, the approaches of Susana to the three men are largely carried out in exterior spaces. Now rivalry is unleashed between the men and the first conflicts arise. In an interesting verbal exchange between Susana and Jesús, the former tries in vain to demand her rights: "Like the others, you do all the talking. Does it not occur to you that I too have a voice?" In his answer, however, Jesús says that words are unnecessary, and that he understands "what your little eyes are telling me." This underlines the fully physical nature of the seduction involved. It is centered on the voluptuous image Susana has given of herself, an image that precludes any other form of discourse. In the following scenes, which are in outdoor settings, the heroine again pretends to fall on two further occasions: once into the well, where she manages to make Alberto join her in the water; and a second time beside the river, where is it to be don Guadalupe himself who will physically help her back to the ranch. The well scene is a blatant metaphor portraying the sexual encounter as a hidden act; the young man finds himself disarmed and disconcerted in the face of desire. The intimate nature and the darkness of the well transport us back to Buñuel's film universe in which the repression and the lack of experience of the younger men is accentuated in contrast with the voluptuous specularization of the female body, as can already be seen in his earliest productions such as *Un chien andalou* (An Andalousian Dog, 1929), and which continues in later works. The strong powers of female seduction over men of an older age continues to be a presence in such films as *Belle de jour* (1967), *Tristana* (1970), and *Cet obscur objet du désir* (That Obscure Object of Desire, 1977), to name just a few of the best known works of Buñuel's filmography.

The rhythm of the film accelerates in crescendo and Susana appears to discard her mad and indiscriminate chase to concentrate all her seductive play on don Guadalupe. This unleashes passionate clashes between the three men and scrapping between the household's women, until the critical moment is reached in which don Guadalupe and Susana kiss most passionately. It should be noted that this episode occurs within the house, in a contrived succession of lights and shadows which unveils an atmosphere in which fear is present (the gothic air and melodies of the early scenes now return), alongside the suggestive erotic air the young woman wields so brilliantly by way of the combination of looks, gestures, and voice effects until she indirectly declares her love for the landlord. The basic transgression that this kiss stands for is present in various elements. In the first

place, as against the case of Jesús and Alberto, don Guadalupe is a married man, the landlord and boss at the ranch who until this moment has behaved with the prudence normally associate with someone of his rank. Furthermore, on taking place within the house, unhidden, there is the chance that they might be seen, as indeed occurs, for it is doña Carmen herself that sees them. The audience is conscious at this point of the real power Susana is acquiring, and it seems that the capacity for the destruction of family ties has no limits.

After witnessing the scene and hearing the confession of her son regarding his love for Susana, doña Carmen finally decides to yield to Felisa's advice and expel the young woman from the ranch. As E. Ann Kaplan suggests, melodrama "articulates women's deepest unconscious fears and fantasies about their lives in patriarchy" (Kaplan, 1987: 117). From this perspective, fear and fantasy combine in the film's strangest scene, the composition of which takes on surrealist overtones. Doña Carmen confronts Susana and beats her violently with a riding whip as if she were a rebellious mare. The association of Susana with the mare had occurred on previous occasions. From the outset, her appearance on the ranch coincides with the fever and illness of Lozana, the landlord's favorite mare. Parallel to this, during a conversation, Jesús tells the young woman his thoughts and says that from the moment he saw her, he had thought, "you're going to tame this filly, Jesús boy, and break her in." It seems that the ranch hand had underestimated his powers and it is now the turn of doña Carmen to tame her – both literally and physically – by way of the very hard blows of the riding whip. Acevedo-Muñoz describes the scene in the following terms: "As doña Carmen beats the young woman, with a devilish, demented grin on her face, her position is emphasized in a low-angle, medium close-up in which she stares directly into the camera, giving the audience Susana's disempowered point of view" (Acevedo-Muñoz, 2003: 91). The camera now reflects, in an instance of surrealist overtones, the way in which doña Carmen becomes taken over by the violent irruption of her worst fears and her violent desire for vengeance. All the restraint that had until then characterized her words, deeds, and gestures is openly subverted by this moment which causes her the pleasure that her face reflects. It is precisely due to the extreme nature of the mother's restraint that the excess of violence which she now exerts against the young woman, and the pleasure this act gives her, stand out even more. It confirms that if the presence of Susana has led to the awakening of the repressed desires of the men, for doña Carmen too it has also been a major stimulus. It now becomes clear that the apparent conformity of the woman to a stifling system of male chauvinist and hierarchized values, as imposed at the ranch, is most unsatisfactory for her. Her way of rebelling against it is revealed in this strange and violent scene. When don Guadalupe crashes in and says that it is Susana that must stay on the farm, and not his wife, it is apparent that nothing will stop the access of the heroine – devil and flesh – to the summit of success. But one of the unexpected turns that are so prototypical of melodrama then occurs, when Jesús appears in the company of reformatory officers. With

the general agreement of all, Susana ends up as she had begun, being dragged by the policemen and bawling as she is expelled from paradise.

Buñuel was not fully satisfied with the denouement of *Susana*: "I regret not having underlined the caricaturesque nature of the ending, when all winds up miraculously well. A candid viewer may take this dénouement seriously"[8] (Buñuel, 1996: 237). If the narrative and visual composition of this final scene is analyzed in relation to the film as a whole, one may clearly see that the director had no reason to hesitate about the reception of the caricaturesque depiction of this denouement. After Susana's departure, order is restored. The cock is heard to crow, the sun alleviates the darkness that has dominated former scenes, and the three members of the family take up their traditional places at the dinner table. It is now doña Carmen who has the prerogative to pardon. She also holds the power to restore hierarchies. In contrast with the words don Guadalupe says to his wife ("In the bedroom I'm leaving you a letter in which I've written the things I haven't the heart to tell you face to face. In it you will find my address in Mexico"), the woman's answer is given in an indirect way when she scolds her son for having sat down at the table before his father. The camera now includes a mid-shot, in one take, showing the parents and son together. It is the family unit which had previously been upset when doña Carmen had left her place while the two men competed for Susana's attention. All three are wearing white clothes. Two further elements underline the scene's excessively idyllic tone and invite us to consider the parodic contrast between these last scenes. In the first place, a series of flocks and herds of different kinds of animals are shown, indicating a return to that agricultural state the family live in. Furthermore, round shapes appear once again and replace the triangular ones shown before. As the culmination of the state of happiness that has now been recovered, Jesús announces that the mare Lozana, which had seemed about to die on Susana's arrival, has miraculously recovered and is "without fever and as right as rain, as if nothing had happened."

Indeed, in the last scenes of the film, all the characters are as fresh and clean as if nothing had happened. Don Guadalupe, on referring to the healing of his mare, says that everything appears to have been a dream. The last words of the film, uttered by Felisa, confirm that impression: "The dream was the other, sir, a true nightmare. That is the pure truth of God." As Acevedo-Muñoz points out:

> In fact, the entire narrative of *Susana* can be compared to the surrealist interest in dreams and dream-works, since Susana really is like a dream. She awakens and tests the entire family's fears (in the women) and desires (in the men). She disrupts the apparently calm slumber of this traditional family in order to reconnect them with the kind of basic instincts that they would repress in their conscious state. (Acevedo-Muñoz, 2003: 92)

This final scene strengthens the idea of Susana as a voluptuous embodiment of the desire that is caused by repressed passion. It awakens hidden fears and mistrust,

but her power disappears on her departure. Mere contemplation of the exhibition of sensuality that she featured contained the ongoing danger of destruction, but the system is stronger and wins in the end. It is for this reason that the entity of the heroine as the subject for the development of the action is questioned by this dream-like quality. Her former statements, principally those directed at Jesús – in which she tried to postulate a will of her own and affirmed her independence and her resistance to the whims of any man – are now eclipsed by the submission of Jesús to the system and by the strength of the traditional status quo, which is capable of restoring itself intact and recovering peace and happiness as if nothing had happened – indeed, as if everything had been a bad dream. This notion of dreams and the unreal nature of actions fits perfectly with the spirit of melodrama, as identified by Mulvey, in reference to the possibilities that female audiences have to identify with the main characters: "If the melodrama offers a fantasy escape for the identifying women in the audience, the illusion is so strongly marked by recognizable, real and familiar traps that the escape is closer to a daydream than a fairy story" (Mulvey, 1987: 79). In *Susana* the radical split there is between the projection of the honorable woman (doña Carmen) and that of the fallen one (the heroine) takes on such an excessive force that the final fall of Susana, in contrast with the recovery in status and the matriarchal power of the wife, can only be seen as a forced and caricaturesque vision of that narrow and weak world which is concealed beneath a mantle of formal firmness.

At the end of the film, nothing is the same for the audience. The contemplation of a deranged family in which all its members have openly overstepped the limits set by moral standards, as they are carried away by the destructive power of desire, brings the audience round to openly question the strength and even the convenience of maintaining these deep-rooted values. If the power of the family and traditional moral values reside in its very invincible capacity to resist vice and temptation, this power is overtly disrupted. Martínez Herranz explains the evolution of characters which are initially created as archetypes but shift toward behavior patterns that turn them into ambivalent, ambiguous, and disturbing beings:

> The obedient and studious son is a keen entomologist who ends up cheating his adored mother and threatening his father. The well-meaning and kind doña Carmen, a model of motherly virtues, is going to enjoy whipping the young woman she has invited into her house like a daughter. Venerable don Guadalupe, the just and magnanimous ranch patriarch, fires his foreman moved by jealousy and ends up expelling his son and wife from the family home, replacing them with his passionate love for Susana.[9] (Martínez Herranz, 2007: 135)

Fuentes recalls the words of Engels on the role of the novelist that Buñuel remembers in a letter to Minna Kautsky. They could be applied to his task as director in *Susana*: "The novelist will have honorably fulfilled his role when, by way of painting real social relations, he destroys conventional illusions regarding

the nature of those relations, destroys the optimism of the bourgeois world and obliges the reader to have doubts about the perennial nature of *status quo*, despite failing to directly offer us a conclusion, despite not committing himself"[10] (Fuentes, 2000: 69). The concern Buñuel feels about not having made a more caricaturesque ending – in which the farce involved in the permanence of traditional values should have been made clearer or more intense – is less relevant when we consider the question in terms of the director's overall film production. For Buñuel had on many occasions expressed his rejection of moral values: "Bourgeois morals are what are immoral for me, and what should be fought against. Morals based on our most unjust social institutions, like religion, the fatherland, the family, culture; the so-called *pillars of society*"[11] (in Poniatowska, 1961: 56, emphasis in original). From the outset of his artistic career, Buñuel repeatedly fixes in images the weak constitution of the moral status quo based on religion and traditional values, and also does so in *Susana*. The value of this film resides in its capacity to question and subvert family principles in a parodical way at the same time as it maintains the aesthetics of excess and the prototypical staging of melodrama. In this way, and as noted by Gledhill, Buñuel uses the genre of melodrama to show hidden desires and resistances in the context of the system's norm limitations: "Melodrama addresses us within the limitations of the *status quo*, of the ideologically permissible. It acknowledges demands inadmissible in the code of social, psychological or political discourse …. Its possibilities lie in this double acknowledgement of how things are in a given historical conjuncture, and of the primary desires and resistances contained within it" (Gledhill, 1987: 38).

In the final shot of *Susana*, while the members of the elder generation head for the interior of the house, Alberto and Jesús, the younger members, together close the windows against which the words "The End" are projected. The naked window at which the face of the heroine first appeared after escaping from the reformatory is now covered by some puritanical curtains which contribute to the isolation of the inhabitants of the house and, in this way, seem to prevent any further damaging presence affecting the peace that has been recovered. The audience, however, knows that this unrealistic attempt to stop the voluptuosity of destruction will be as useless as the sheer material of the curtains that cover the window which closes the film *Susana*. This film, as others directed by Buñuel in Mexico, might be seen as a minor and even disappointing contribution to his splendid work; as Acevedo-Muñoz comments, films like *Una mujer sin amor* (A Woman without Love, 1951), *Subida al cielo* (Ascent to Heaven, aka Mexican Bus Ride, 1951), or the one analyzed in the present chapter, might "upset our image of Buñuel as the European surrealist phenomenon who was always ill-at-ease within a national film industry" (Acevedo-Muñoz, 2003: 24). What can be seen is that while Buñuel often pushed at the conventions, he also worked within them. In this case, he succeeds in invigorating melodrama with a disruptive approach that reveals the hidden contradictions of Mexican patriarchal society and underscores the capacity for questioning the limitations of the permissible and acceptable, as he admirably does in every one of his films.

Notes

1 "¿Qué haces? ¿En qué trabajas para subsistir y en qué para perdurar?" All quotes will be translated and the original will appear in endnotes.

2 After the modern Mexican state came into being following the Revolution of 1910, machismo came to be a defining characteristic of "mexicanidad," or Mexican national identity. Three of the traditional genres of the Mexican cinematic tradition were the revolutionary melodrama (an allegorical examination of the Mexican Revolution, tracing the effects of the conflicting ideologies underlying the revolution displaced into the family structural patterns); the *cabaretera* [dancehall] prostitution melodrama which included musical bolero themes; and the *comedia ranchera* (a Mexican version of a cowboy musical that incorporated elements of comedy, tragedy, popular music, and folkloric or nationalistic themes.) Please refer to Martínez Herranz (2007) for further information.

3 "Podía haber estado bien, pero me falló el final, porque el final parece serio. Podría haber tenido algo la película, según algunos aún lo tiene."

4 "Los giros inesperados, los encuentros fortuitos, los cambios polares dentro de un mismo personaje, las abruptas inversiones de la línea argumental, especialmente en los desenlaces, y, sobre todo, el protagonismo que adquieren la sorpresa y el azar como elementos cohesivos del desarrollo argumental frente a la motivación psicológica o realista de la narrativa del cine convencional."

5 "Esta actriz de origen argentino debutó en el cine en 1948, iniciando una carrera que iba a estar marcada por su voluptuosa belleza."

6 "El rizoma es una antigenealogía, una memoria corta o antimemoria. El rizoma procede por variación, expansión, conquista, captura, inyección."

7 "Su autor dejó constancia de ello implantando esta ambigüedad al elegir el nombre de la protagonista, el mismo que el de la casta esposa retratada en el libro de Daniel que defendió su honra frente a los dos viejos lujuriosos que la acosaron física y moralmente."

8 "Lamento no haber subrayado la caricatura en el final, cuando termina milagrosamente bien. Un espectador no avisado puede tomarse en serio este desenlace."

9 "El hijo obediente y estudioso es un enamorado del mundo de los insectos que termina engañando a su adorada madre y levantando la mano a su padre. La bondadosa y caritativa doña Carmen, modelo de las virtudes de la maternidad, va a disfrutar golpeando con una fusta a la joven que ha recogido bajo su techo como una hija. El venerable don Guadalupe, patriarca justo y magnánimo del rancho, despide movido por los celos a su caporal y termina expulsando de la casa familiar a su hijo y a su esposa, para reemplazarlos por su apasionado amor hacia Susana."

10 "El novelista habrá cumplido honradamente cuando, a través de una pintura de las relaciones sociales auténticas, destruya las ilusiones convencionales sobre la naturaleza de dichas relaciones, quebrante el optimismo del mundo burgués y obligue a dudar al lector de la perennidad del orden existente, incluso aunque no nos señale directamente una conclusión, aunque no tome partido."

11 "La moral burguesa es lo inmoral para mí, contra lo que se debe luchar. La moral fundada en nuestras injustísimas instituciones sociales, como la religión, la patria, la familia, la cultura; en fin, los llamados *pilares de la sociedad*."

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12

Young Outlaws and Marginal Lives in Latin American Cinema

The Landmark of Buñuel's *Los olvidados*

Ana Moraña

Introduction

In the relatively new field of Latin American cinema studies, theorists and critics often find themselves confronted with the problematic need to borrow concepts and perspectives that originated in reflections on European and US cinema. It is for this reason that hegemonic theoretical perspectives are applied to a Latin American corpus that uses original techniques, languages, and specific cultural foci in order to represent its own realities and conflicts.

The theorists of Latin American cinema in the 1960s and 1970s boasted of their ability to create an alternative space of ideological and formal production that discussed and responded to particular Continental needs. These tendencies translated into expressions such as Third Cinema and Imperfect Cinema. The Brazilian equivalent was the Cinema Novo, which resulted in Glauber Rocha's 1965 manifesto *Uma estética da fome* (An Aesthetic of Hunger). All of these schools of thought were grouped under the heading of "New Latin American Cinema," as Ana López reminds us in her study (1997). Several directors produced important manifestos during this time. Among them are the Cubans Tomás Gutiérrez Alea and Julio García Espinosa, the Argentinians Fernando Birri, Fernando Solanas, and Octavio Getino, the Brazilian Glauber Rocha as stated above, and the Bolivian Jorge Sanjinés, among others – members of experimental groups, *cinematecas*, *cine clubes*, publications, and schools that were supported itinerantly by private institutes and public agencies. Their ideas translated into films such as *Deus e o Diabo na Terra do*

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Sol (Black God, White Devil, by Glauber Rocha, Brazil, 1964), *Yawar Mallku* (The Blood of the Condor, by Jorge Sanjinés and Grupo Ukamau, Bolivia, 1969), and *La hora de los hornos* (The Hour of the Furnaces, by Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, Argentina, 1970), among many others. López explains the meaning of the New Latin American Cinema movement:

> In all Latin American nations, the 1960s were years of cultural and political effervescence, and the cinema – conceived of as an aesthetic, cultural, and political/ideological phenomenon – was self-consciously immersed in the maelstrom of popular and intellectual debates … marginal, politicized, often clandestine cinematic practice that has managed to give expression to new forms and contents; to create alternative modes of production, consumption, and reception; to produce great box office hits as well as utterly clandestine films, and, in short, to change the social function of the cinema in Latin America. (López, 1997: 136–137)

What is certain is that these theorists and filmmakers made an abundance of declarations, manifestos, and definitions that analyzed and promoted what would become a new militant cinema, in which artistic expression was nearly inseparable from political affiliations and agendas. They did not produce, nonetheless, a theoretical-formal system that might serve as a tool for subsequent analysis of Latin American cinematic production in its own terms, nor did the respective academic institutions support the development of this kind of perspective. One of the reasons for this lack was the destruction of many of these theoretical groups and creative centers by authoritarian Latin American governments that emerged during those decades in many of the countries that were producing cinema at that time. These governments frequently made it necessary to whitewash the political messages behind both the production and the promotion of Latin American films. This is also why it is interesting that Buñuel, this Spanish Surrealist, by education a Catholic and in behavior an anarchist, produced the movie that would be a landmark in the Latin American cinema to come and would open a theoretical space in which to rethink not only this artistic form, but also the whole of Latin American reality.

Finally, at the turn of the millennium much of the Latin American film industry has abandoned the proud banner of peculiarity that those revolutionary theorists carried – technical imperfection and simplicity as cinematographic identity and the inclusion of a central political message – and adopted more conventional forms. Today the industry has resorted to productions for a more globalized Latin American viewer that is accustomed to Hollywood-style cinematic language. On the other hand, there is a minority among the European and US audience that these Latin American productions wish to reach (aiming for prizes and future productions with larger budgets).[1] These new films satisfy hegemonic standards (a not very disturbing political message; an aesthetics that does not offend the sensibility of the audience; the survival of the star system) through their narratological and cinematographic strategies, their cultural references, and their efforts to interpellate global and globalized publics. Through these films, some Latin

American directors, technicians, and actors have succeeded in gaining access to First World movie productions. Examples of this phenomenon are *Babel*, directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu (France, Mexico, United States, 2006) and the recent Oscar winner for best foreign language film from Argentina, Juan José Campanella's *El secreto de sus ojos* (The Secret in Their Eyes, 2009), as well as the success of *Cidade de Deus* (City of God, by Fernando Meirelles and Kátia Lund, Brazil, 2002). These films also demonstrate technical maturity, creative efficacy, and excellent acting.

But not all filmmakers have made concessions. The Latin American cinema of the past 20 years also has produced films that resist the kind of negotiations that a Hollywood-type language engages in, including *Bolivia* (Israel Adrián Caetano, Argentina, 2001) and *Mundo grúa* (Crane World, Pablo Trapero, Argentina, 1999), the work of the Argentinian Lucrecia Martel, the Chilean Patricio Guzmán, the Peruvian Francisco Lombardi, or the Colombian Víctor Gaviria, to cite just a few examples. These films are innovative for their themes and cinematic language, the absence of emotional or formal clichés, the occasional use of black and white (in the case of Caetano and Trapero, among others), and a consistent formal dialogue between cinematic fiction and documentary. These characteristics reflect the persistence of a Latin American identity that aims to create from and for particularity and does not necessarily aspire toward box-office success (although many films do end up being box-office successes). In an era during which the manipulation (technologically speaking) of the cinematic image is central to Hollywood box-office success, the use of an imagery that is free of clichés by such directors as Caetano and Trapero suggests a return to the models of the New Latin American Cinema and a reaffirmation of an alternative Latin American aesthetic. I find that, at this point in the history of Latin American cinema and considering its abundance and quality, it is time to reconstitute, compare, and categorize a growing corpus, with the aim of both organizing and proposing new theoretical agendas, and with an eye to reinforcing the multiple contributions of Latin American cinema.

It is in light of these reflections that I wish to examine Luis Buñuel's *Los olvidados* (The Forgotten Ones, aka The Young and The Damned, 1950) in order to discuss two fundamental aspects of the film. First, I am interested in its ideological and formal peculiarity as a foundational production, which situates it among the most important films in the history of cinema (beyond its national context). Second, I would like to highlight its position as a precursor to the cinema of violence and urban marginalization, a formal category that has been abundantly popular in nearly every Latin American country in recent decades. It is noteworthy that, in current scholarship on Buñuel and especially on *Los olvidados*, criticism on this theme is varied and abundant, but a reordering and revision that confronts it with other Latin American productions helps to shed new light on the work of Buñuel.

The preferred genres among Latin American producers, directors, and screenwriters differ greatly from those of Hollywood and the European film industry.

Documentary and drama are the stars, with comedy in a secondary status even though comedies are made in Latin American countries.[2] Melodrama carries a great, though not exclusive, weight in Mexican and Argentinian cinema. In spite of the popularity and importance of music to the Latin American continent, the musical is less popular than would be expected. Furthermore, Latin America seems to only consume, not produce, genres like science fiction, children's films. and horror (although the films of "El Santo," a Mexican wrestler-superhero, had great success in the 1960s). The thriller, on the other hand, tends to refer to social and political realities in its countries of origin. It is worth noting that Latin American cinema at the turn of the millennium has expanded its areas of interest, and the genres it cultivates (many of the films by Guillermo del Toro) are examples.

The political or social drama seems to be one of the genres that Latin America has preferred, which suggests that this cinema has grown from the scars of political and social abuses. Also, given the power of the cinematic image (due to the power of the image in general in today's culture), it is clear that audiences have assigned cinema the task of generating answers and reflecting upon themes of national identity. In this chapter, then, I focus on the foundational and modeling influence of Buñuel's film on the cinema of urban violence and marginalized youth in Latin America. One risk for research on this assiduously examined topic in literature and the media is that it could become a facile representation of Latin American realities when read in a foreign context. In fact, this issue has reached the point where we are facing the birth of a new stereotype about Latin America that depicts it as the locus of urban violence and the social neglect of future generations, especially the children and adolescents of marginalized classes who are thus considered both victims and agents of social disintegration.[3] The inauguration of this new and more honest analytical perspective was anticipated by a Spanish Surrealist in the mid-twentieth century in Mexico City.

The Lesson of the Master

It should be admitted that Buñuel is an unexpected source of precedents for Latin American cinema of the 1960s and 1970s, given that the surrealist work that preceded and followed *Los olvidados* falls under the category of auteur cinema. They are films that carry the unmistakable stylistic, thematic, and cinematographic signature of their director, specially the films that he produced in France in the late 1960s and 1970s. They are associated with what is called "Second Cinema," which is generally, but not exclusively, European. This type of production was criticized by the Latin American directors mentioned above because it represented the petty bourgeoisie and generated an art for and by a cultural elite.[4] Today, *Los olvidados* is a film that audiences, filmmakers, and researchers identify as a landmark

and as amongst the author's most important work. With regard to this, Julián Gutiérrez-Albilla, paraphrasing King (1990), asserts:

> La película también se opone a la retórica dogmática nacionalista y las convenciones visuales del cine clásico mexicano, el cual evolucionó a partir de la tradición visual revolucionaria. Funcionando a la vez como un documental social … como una revisión de la mitología revolucionaria propagada por las películas melodramáticas durante la época dorada del cine mexicano, como las películas de Emilio Fernández, *Los olvidados* ha sido considerada como un precedente oblícuo de un nuevo cine en América Latina que se pudiera definir como de *auteur*, abiertamente militante, de orientación izquierdista y formalmente experimental, ejemplificado por la generación posclásica de directores mexicanos, cubanos, argentinos y brasileiros. (Gutiérrez-Albilla, 2005: 31)[5]

It is also important to remember the influence on Buñuel of the Italian neorealist Vittorio De Sica, neorealism being a form born of the ruins of European fascism, when the Left was in search of a voice that was more authentic than realist (Evans, 1995: 78).[6] With *Los olvidados* Buñuel obliges Latin American cinema to confront new forms and theories that would become key years later (non-professional or natural actors, real settings, discussion of social themes, and formal similarity to the documentary) and films that touch on the themes of urban violence and youth.

Buñuel always filmed according to schedule and adapted to the film's budget. In his memoir, *Mon dernier soupir* (My Last Sigh, 1984), he frequently complains of not having earned enough money, but he respected his profession and criticized actors who did not behave professionally (for example, Simone Signoret and Josephine Baker). Buñuel filmed quickly because he understood the time demands of the film industry, though he was also capable of understanding the nature of the medium he was using to express himself and how its connection to the growing consumer market worked. He interpreted the codes of Latin American modernity correctly and also understood (better than the Mexican audience who initially criticized him) the traumatic impact of modernity in the urban context as well as the traditions and challenges of the Mexican Revolution. He knew how to read the social implications and consequences of these events, and the result of this interaction was *Los olvidados*.

Buñuel succeeded in scandalizing Mexican intellectuals with a film that was not made by a "spoiled rich kid" or a Surrealist (though there are surrealist elements in it). The film was neither about his own country (Spain) nor about a social reality that historically pertained to him. It did not even follow, save for certain episodes, the parameters of his earlier productions. Buñuel was living in exile, which reduced the possibilities of being aided by his family, and was left without the patronage of the de Noailles family (who supported his earlier French productions).

As underlined before, Buñuel founded not only a new aesthetic, but also a genre that would be particular to future Latin American cinema. In the films that followed *Los olvidados* we can find common characteristics. For example, they use both

natural and professional actors. They intertwine the themes of marginalized youth and violence, and it is typical that they connect with the issues of crime (drug use and trafficking, rape, theft) that are endemic to an urban context. They are filmed in original locations (very often at the outskirts of the city) and they always deal with poor, demolished, and dirty environments, "basurales, casas destartaladas, depósitos de chatarras, recintos abandonados, casas miserables," *lugares de precariedad*[7] (Aguilar, 2006: 44). These films are also characterized by the absence of the father and a weak or non-existent maternal figure. They depict transient and uprooted subjects, a fact that flows into the presentation of multiple forms of otherness (racial, physical, and sexual). The presence of injured bodies is common, reflecting their physical surroundings and acting as metaphors for the disintegration of the social system. In general, they reveal the ineffectiveness or threatening nature of the police or the state. As Gonzalo Aguilar shows in his analysis of the Argentinian film *Pizza, birra, faso* (Pizza, Beer and Cigarettes, by Adrián Caetano and Bruno Stagnaro, 1998), among others, the films that fall in this category show the downfall of the impoverished middle class, and represent, as Aguilar suggests, "qué sucede cuando nos quedamos sin hogar" (Aguilar, 2006: 43).[8] Finally, some Latin American films that follow *Los olvidados* make use of real language or even slang (such as *parlache* in *Rodrigo D: no futuro* [1990] and certain uses of *lunfardo* in *Pizza, birra, faso*). It is common that in this type of film the line between fictional social drama and documentary is crossed, with the use of techniques from both genres.[9] Gustavo Remedi sees in some of the films the presence of the uncanny in connection with characters, scenes, and plots, which produces a counterpoint between the center and the (urban, cultural, economic) margin, where the characters represent for the viewer a distortion of the habitual and an alteration of the hegemonic society (1998).

This is a trend in cinema that takes off under the inspiration of *Los olvidados*, then evolves and gains strength in the majority of Latin American countries where film is produced up to the present day. Surveying this Latin American cinematographic genre, we find different instances of modernity and postmodernity, as well as a variety of national approaches. It is a genre that requires the Latin American urban margin as setting and inspiration, given that it provides an increasingly prevalent twentieth-century reality in which modernity and postmodernity are read according to new codes. Directors like Víctor Gaviria, Héctor Babenco, Adrián Caetano, Bruno Stagnaro, and Walter Salles, among others, have followed Buñuel's tradition, separated themselves from it, and reformulated it. As they have done so, they have examined new realities with new theoretical approaches and confronted the unique challenges of a "global aesthetic" (Cisneros, 2007: 103) without discarding the foundation that the Spanish director put in place in Mexico in the 1950s. Jorge Ruffinelli, in his book on Víctor Gaviria, asserts that "*Rodrigo D: no futuro* is also a 'child' of *Los olvidados*" (Ruffinelli, 2004: 137). Other directors attempted, through fiction, to confront audiences with these realities and the result was films like *La virgen de los sicarios* (Our Lady of the Assassins, by Barbet Shroeder, Colombia, 2000), *Central do Brasil* (Central

Station, by Walter Salles, Brazil, 1998), and *Amores perros* (Love's a Bitch, by Alejandro González Iñárritu, Mexico, 2000), among other examples.

The Mexican public and critics reacted to the premiere of *Los olvidados* with harsh language and anger. The Colombian director Gaviria experienced a similar rejection when he presented some of his films, which were called "pornomiseria" ("poverty porn") and were considered the product of the camera's morbid pleasure in depicting the social margins of the city of Medellín.[10] In both cases, there was a clash with a public that resented the international projection of an image in which corruption and poverty were paramount. Today, that image has become so representative of a part of Latin American reality that we have run the risk of forging a new transcontinental stereotype.

An example of the transition from *Los olvidados* to the turn-of-the-millennium film on youth and urban marginality would be *Pixote* (1981). Carrying the theories of the cinematic hard line of the 1960s and 1970s, the Argentinian Héctor Babenco creates in Brazil (illustrating the importance of the network of filmmakers in Latin America) a film that contains every element of the genre discussed here. It portrays multiple forms of violence (the extreme loneliness of the youth, sexual violence, and poverty, to name just a few), a corrupt governmental system, and absent parents. It also adds the problematic of gender (as it introduces the issue of the marginalization of the homosexual) that other films on this theme have surprisingly avoided. Making no concessions, *Pixote* subjects the viewer to a descent into the urban hell of Rio de Janeiro, with indigent characters imprisoned in the *favelas* (there are also non-professional actors, as is common, and some of them, like the protagonist, are extremely young). The poetics of *Los olvidados* and its complex interweaving of themes is not what Babenco is aiming for in *Pixote*. Everything in the film is desolation and neglect. It is a film that has elevated this genre to another level. Babenco picked up this aesthetic where Buñuel left it, developing and solidifying it into a genre of Latin American cinema.

Los olvidados: A Classic

As a film made up of intersections, *Los olvidados* falls aesthetically between documentary and fiction, between neorealism and Surrealism, although a flatly realist tendency in the portrayal of events predominates. It provides, though marginally, an analysis of the function of the state in one of its most critical moments: the presidency of Miguel Alemán (1946–1952), which coincides in part with the Golden Age of Mexican cinema (1947–1959).[11] With the government of Alemán, the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) is reformulated as a governing party and Mexico's process of modernization is accelerated, with an increasingly authoritarian state. Not only does Mexico City grow, but also urban life in general becomes more predominant and defines a new national profile.

It is at this moment that the Buñuelian vision of Mexico City and its marginalized citizens is introduced. Buñuel begins the film associating Mexico City and its problems with the other metropolises of the world; by way of introduction, a voice-over speaks to the spectator of life in the great European cities and New York. He insists that the events in the ensuing film are real and the characters authentic, although the story is fictional and the plot has been carefully elaborated. The film was shot in the marginal neighborhoods of the great Mexican capital when it was striving to project the image of a nation that was competitive on a grand scale. The film challenged this political propaganda, as well as the great national icons of maternity, childhood innocence, and the state as protector, which earned it a virulent initial reaction from its audience, as Buñuel recalls in his memoir. It is interesting to see the reaction of so many intellectuals, including Vittorio De Sica himself, who were unable to process the film in all its breadth.

In the plot Buñuel negotiates dramatic lines delicately, creates protagonists and antagonists, and produces moments of tension and release that are calibrated to a well-told story. In the process, the Spanish director expanded the Latin American imaginary by portraying the greatest villain of our cinema: Jaibo (played by the young non-professional actor Roberto Cobo). Julia Tuñón asserts: "El filme no ofrece conclusiones, no redime a nadie. Los personajes no son la encarnación de almas dulces o de santos laicos: la madre es sexuada a conciencia y no quiere al hijo producto de la violación" (Tuñón, 2003: 76).[12]

Setting and characters are found, recreated, and made to correspond with one another, while cinema serves to inform the viewer about urban reality, resulting in novel reflections for Latin America in the mid-twentieth century. Later, Tuñón asserts:

> La metrópoli moderna, limpia y ordenada sólo será real, si acaso, para un grupo social y se acomoda en tensión constante en el avasallante proceso de crecimiento urbano. Sin embargo, es la que se querría y se presume durante el alemanismo, destacando las luces de los centros nocturnos, los multifamiliares, los ríos entubados, los servicios de luz, agua y drenaje, los teléfonos públicos, las anchas avenidas. En 1950, la ciudad tiene 3,480,000 habitantes. Es la época del auge del cine y del radio en el que se escuchan ritmos tropicales y románticos boleros: hay una gama de sonidos que no escuchamos en *Los olvidados*, pues la música que ellos escuchan se reduce a las canciones del ciego en el mercado … la ciudad que representa Buñuel más parece una ciudad rota, enferma y supurante, como los cuerpos de varios de los personajes del filme. (Tuñón, 2003: 79–80)[13]

The filmmaker chooses one among the many Latin American metropolises. On the symbolic meanings of cities and urban spaces, Michel Foucault says, in his definition of heterotopias:

> There are also, probably in every culture, in every civilization, real places – places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society – which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the

> other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality. (Foucault, 1986: 24)

Foucault, in his list of possible heterotopias, does not include slums, but we could include, following his definition, the *lost cities* of Mexico. Governments often propose to connect the concept of the slum to the adjective "transitory," even though they possess little of that quality. Marc Augé's definition of the *non-place* is not completely applicable, either, though it shares many isolated elements of the slum (2008). In these places very frequently the individual experiences a partial loss of identity; the subject shares a spatial impersonality that does not reflect nationalities, ethnicities, or cultures. The slums are not, according to Augé, "anthropological places"; the non-place is their opposite. Airports, shopping malls, and highways are globalized spaces, and therefore negate the local. There are neither local narratives nor the production of utopias there, but rather the anonymity of a transitory equality in the space of supermodernity.

Neither the heterotopia nor the idea of the non-place (not to mention the utopia) explains the slum, although they approach the slum without including it. They are the failure of utopia; they do not condense the heterotopia's atemporal national essence, which is concrete and abstract at the same time. Nor do they possess its solemnity of signification, since they are too concrete, improvised and impelled by necessity. Instead, though the slums are spaces visited by the local in terms of tradition, they create their own traditions and often their own laws (frequently in ignorance of federal laws), as we see in *Rodrigo D: no futuro* or *Cidade de Deus*. Sometimes, in the interest of continuity the slums have developed a sense of community that sometimes revamps them and, at others, pushes them to the limits of the law, as occurs with the loyalty that entire areas of Medellín have shown to the drug cartel, and specially to Pablo Escobar, as Gabriel García Márquez relates in *Noticia de un secuestro* (News of a Kidnapping, 1996). But the general rule is that the residents of slums live in conditions of poverty as second-class citizens. At times, areas of the traditional city are reduced (according to the fluctuations of progress) to slums, and the turn-of-the-century colonial residence or large, rundown house becomes a tenement or abandoned building inhabited by transient residents, where the remnants of wrought-iron bars or the large art nouveau window reign. As Kees Koonings and Dirk Krujit point out:

> Between 1950 and 1980, the share of Latin America's informal economy grew steadily, only to accelerate in the 1980s and 1990 …. Latin America has thus become the continent in which in most of its countries a significant segment of the population is, at once, poor, informal and excluded. … This development is reflected in persistent and often increasing inequality in the distribution of urban income and wealth and in the geographic layout of Latin America's metropolis, in which the expansion of slums and the deterioration of popular neighbourhoods have become clearly visible over the past two or three decades. (Koonings and Krujit, 2007: 9)

Extreme poverty and the slum were born during the twentieth century with the acceleration of areas of modernity in Latin American economies. Buñuel, who had already sharpened his vision of poverty (though in a rural context) in the film *Las Hurdes*, aka *Tierra sin pan* (Land without Bread, 1933), cast a different gaze toward a marginal Mexican urban poverty that nobody saw and that seemed to demonstrate the falsity of the revolutionary utopia and denounce the failures of *alemanismo*.

I find that the definition of the non-place partially helps to define the character of Ojitos of *Los olvidados*, the rural indigenous child who was tricked and abandoned in the slum by his father. He lives only briefly in the fictional space of the film, as well as the viewer. Ojitos is a passenger in transit, a transitory citizen (of second-class status) who has an earlier life that he wishes to regain, one enriched by rural tradition. According to Peter William Evans:

> By the time of the making of *Los olvidados*, Cárdenas's policy of distribution of land to the Indians – according to Niedergang, resulting in the transfer of 15 million hectares to over 80,000 farmers (1971: 272) – had been reversed, and Ojitos, the little Indian boy from the country (from Los Reyes) symbolizes the defeat of Socialism by the more Porfirian instincts of later governments. (Evans, 1995: 74)

The character changes back to his original name upon leaving the slum. Ojitos passes through the slum the way Augé's traveler moves down the highway in the supermodernity of the turn of the century: without his own identity, without identifying with his space, recuperating his individuality at the end. But in the case of Ojitos this experience is traumatic, and the recuperation of the wholeness of his identity, which involves the return to family, to hometown, name, and community, is yet to be seen.[14] His attire – rural or *"fuereño"* (characteristic of the out-of-towner, as the children call him) – his hat and *sarape* (serape) all speak of a character connected to a history that precedes urban centers themselves. His indigenous facial features, which inspire the other characters to give him his new name, suggest the hope of a locality whose values are not represented in the corrupt laws of the burgeoning slum (which half a century later would be assaulted by globalization). Ojitos (from *ojos*, meaning little eyes), as his name suggests, is "the one who watches" and knows he will not stay; he is, to a certain point, an optional witness. Ojitos understands his own poverty; he understands imperfectly his father's reasons for abandoning him in the urban labyrinth, and he knows his rural nature has given him values that are different from those of the other characters who interact with him. Tuñón reminds us that many people are, like the city itself, "halfway between the agricultural and urban worlds" (Tuñón, 2003: 80). Buñuel does not linger on the predicament of Ojitos; nonetheless he gives him a space and presents him as a social alternative. Still, his generosity, his values (he resists killing *"El Ciego"* [the Blind Man] though he initiates an attempt to do so), his tender beauty (which inspires Meche to protect him) are not the traits that

inspire Surrealists. Buñuel offers us Ojitos to remind us of the power of tradition and of the possibility of a space for hope (and also, because Buñuel immediately understood the complexities of Latin America, and in this case Mexican, modernity, which alternates at each step with tradition). Nonetheless it is my contention that the character of Ojitos is understood according to the parameters of Orientalism: as a character seen through the Western and hegemonic gaze, perceived in his folkloric – traditional – dimension as *other*. This character never changes his traditional costume, which goes along with his traditional morals. He does not steal; he is not corrupted; he does not change and he does not surrender. He lives in the secret world of the exotic. Even though he functions as a dramatic counterweight to Jaibo, his character loses force as part of the simplification that frequently comes with *otherness*, the simplification to which Buñuel falls prey. He is the rural *other*, more morally "pure," incomprehensible to the modern, supermodern, or postmodern urban subject, an *other* that is presented as solidly good and morally clean and seems to be part of a positive stereotype that is as damaging as its opposite. Next to him is Jaibo, with his malice, his complex strategies, and his multiple dimensions, someone who little by little becomes increasingly attractive as a character. Ojitos denounces one of the aspects of the economic crisis in Mexico that is beginning to postpone the ideals of the Revolution. This social transformation feeds the way in which all of the characters in *Los olvidados* are perceived (with the exception of the director of the farm) as second-class citizens: "… we introduce the notion of 'informal citizenship,' the precarious implantation of (urban) second-class citizenship, as the long-term result of the mainstream model of economic reforms in the 1980s and 1990s" (Koonings and Krujit, 2007: 8). In accordance with Koonings and Krujit, even though the economic model that banished multitudes to the margins dates from the last decades of the twentieth century, it is clear that that reality was in process well beforehand. El Ciego (Miguel Inclán) is considered the witness of a better, and already lost, world; he longs for Porfirio Díaz and a time when he believes "there was more respect." With this character Buñuel confronts us with the commonplace theme of the physical blindness of a character that does not see tangible reality but rather the one that is beyond sight. But again Buñuel saves himself from simplification, presenting us with a character that is conservative but subsumed by poverty and morally corrupt (he attempts to sexually abuse Meche, exploits Ojitos, and mistreats the other children).[15] His blindness prevents him from seeing the present and emotionally he prefers to look backward, which represents the dark side of a form of poverty that does not recognize itself fully and defends the arguments of those that create it.

Nonetheless, El Ciego is exceeded by Jaibo in his moral, physical, and social poverty. Still, it is important to remember that the characters' villainy stems from the fact that the slum obligates each subject to turn to his instincts to survive. If El Ciego represents the worst of the corrupt world of the past, and if Jaibo represents a future Latin America in which Buñuel has questioned utopia (proof of this is the failed attempt of the director of the farm to rehabilitate Pedro), then there is little

hope. Such a conclusion is not difficult to accept when taking into account Buñuel's ideological perspective, and it has been repeated in many Latin American films (with national variations and diverse theoretical postures) up to today. The suicide of the main character in *Rodrigo D: no futuro*, Víctor Gaviria's film, is the extreme expression of this pessimism with regard to the national projects and the familial and social disintegration of the urban sphere.

Observing the characters and the dramatic oppositions from which they emerge, we see that they serve to create a space of melodrama, the favorite genre in Latin American culture from the nineteenth-century novel to the *telenovela* (soap opera), as well as popular leaflets, radio dramas, and real life. Melodrama is also one of the themes studied by Carlos Monsiváis and which he connects not only to modernity but also to urban violence and the fatalism it inspires in the marginalized citizen. He reminds us that, in the daily acts of violence in Latin American cities, the perpetrator feels he is part of a film that has yet to be produced, given that the melodramatic dynamic has penetrated the popular imaginary so completely (2002).

Jesús Martín Barbero asserts that the popular *folletín* (leaflet) represents a voice through which an underworld speaks, a voice that neither the left nor the right pays attention to, each for its own reasons:

> Me refiero al submundo del *terror urbano*, de la violencia brutal que puebla la ciudad y es no sólo control policial en las calles o ejercicio de la disciplina en las fábricas, sino agresión masculina contra las mujeres, especialmente en el barrio popular, y de las mujeres sobre los niños y de la miseria sobre todos en cada casa. Una mezcla de miedo, resentimiento y vicio que responde a una cotidianidad insufrible … Haciendo trizas la imagen de lo popular romántico folclórico, el folletín habla de lo popular-urbano: sucio y violento, lo que geográficamente se extiende del suburbio a la cárcel pasando por los internados para locos y las casas de prostitución. (Martín Barbero, 1998: 184–185)[16]

The above reflection could be applied to the way in which Buñuel's film represents social injustice. Further on, Martín Barbero reminds us, speaking of the Golden Age of Mexican cinema, that the audience of that time understood: "One did not go to the cinema to dream, but rather to learn" (Martín Barbero, 1998: 227), and explains, citing Carlos Monsiváis, that cinema helps the individual recognize himself, given that it teaches him "to be Mexican" (Martín Barbero, 1998: 228).

It is for this reason that the juxtaposition of characters places Jaibo at the dramatic axis of the film. Furthermore, he is a complex character that needs others (Pedro, Julián, Ojitos, el Ciego) to construct him through opposition. Jaibo receives partial vindication on a couple of occasions during the film: when he tells Pedro's mother of his childhood as an orphan, and at the end of the film, at the moment of his death. He remembers his dead mother, whom he associates with the Virgin in her image of perfection and goodness (in fact, an image of the Virgin during his final dream reinforces this idea). We also know that he never knew his father and

that he suffered seizures when he was very young. In brief, this character who is the essence of evil, the bad seed that grows among the other children, suddenly becomes the emotionally crippled child of poverty. At the end of the film he transforms before our eyes from executioner to victim.

In opposition to Jaibo is Ojitos, who might be what Jaibo was in his childhood. At the end of the film Ojitos is lost in the crowd while searching for his father (who is a symptomatic absence in the film and in all the later cinema of urban minorities and poverty), and the viewer wonders if, within a decade, Ojitos will not have turned into Jaibo. Ojitos is not only an example of the social neglect that the institution of the family cannot undo; he is also an important element of the melodramatic strain, that, though not pronounced, is still present in Buñuel's film (although, according to King, this strain would be a combination of the writings of the Marquis de Sade, which Buñuel admired, with melodrama).[17] In order to show the extreme neglect of these children we see Ojitos suckle at the teat of a nanny goat, searching for nourishment and the origins of the human emotional connection.[18] The director exposes the viewer to the greatest expression of the solitude that is possible in a changing city and culture.

Stephen Hart reminds us that in the film the director does not disguise violence, which occupies a central role (Hart, 2004: 75). For his part, John King effectively expresses the essence of Jaibo and his meaning to the film: "Jaibo is an angel; when they meet him, each of the characters reveals his or her true identity. He flaunts the laws and strictures of society, shatters the myth of the Mexican benevolent state, releasing the desires of love and death, signaling the return of what is repressed by the myth of modernity" (King, 1990: 131).

Jaibo and Julián (Javier Amézcua) form the film's structural opposition, by which Buñuel proposes the dynamic of good and evil where tragedy is seen in its social dimension. Each young man is a two-sided phenomenon: extreme social pressure produces heroes (Julián is morally superior even to his own father) and villains like Jaibo. Brave and hard-working, Julián is a character of a solidly positive nature, but his function as a character is passive – not as an agent of change, but as a victim who is also the vehicle for the fall of others. Pedro (Alfonso Mejía) becomes an accomplice to Jaibo in Julián's crime, and Jaibo himself is killed while fleeing the police. This opposition is repeated, for example, in *Cidade de Deus* but Caetano and Stagnaro do not perpetuate this structure it in *Pizza, birra, faso*, in which all of the characters are lost in the violence of crime, or in depression and solitude, as in the case of *Rodrigo D: no futuro*.[19] The balance between good and evil is the indispensable formula since tragedy and drama have existed as categories of classical literature, though at times the distance between fall and salvation is short. Films that depict urban violence through the use of fiction and professional actors, like *Amores perros*, show devastating social realities, and the tragedy and drama arise from the confrontations of tensions, value systems, or the simple intersection of events – destiny itself – which lends the story more of a dimension of tragedy, in the classical sense, than of drama.[20]

Pedro, for his part, is a tragic character given that he unsuccessfully tries to overcome the forces of his environment (poverty, the indifference of his mother, and Jaibo). The director of the farm tries to give him an opportunity, which he is disposed to accept, but Jaibo steps in. The role of the farm director in the film has been discussed at length, along with the fact that Buñuel included a character that represents the positive (though ineffective) action of the state. His tactic with Pedro is peculiar, and his attitude has been seen by some critics (see Franco, 1989; Tuñón, 2003) as an expression of the paternalism of the state – distant and detached from a surrounding reality that is increasingly overwhelming.

It is in this way that Pedro is betrayed on all fronts: he is the child of a rape and his mother, as a result, does not love him. He is hounded by the gang leader Jaibo, who represents for Pedro the force of a destiny that cannot be avoided (wherein tragedy in its original sense is found). He is also betrayed by a government that intellectualizes, idealizes, and in the end solves nothing, in spite of its best intentions. His mother, the farm director, and his work at the knife factory would be possible escapes from Pedro's moral and economic situation, but Jaibo, who embodies the power of the Moira, makes it impossible each time. Like the mixture of an unwanted child and the father figure of the child gang, Jaibo betrays Pedro by sleeping with his mother, the woman who denies her son everything but surrenders herself to the betrayer and murderer. Jaibo steals the farm director's money and it is Jaibo who takes the knife that causes Pedro to lose his job. Jaibo made him an accomplice and Pedro was never able to rebel, since his neglect is emotional, not just economic. He wants to climb socially (become a part of the "humble but honest" proletariat) but as a character he represents the extreme of social marginalization. All possible political, religious, and psychological narratives fail with this extreme character, whose body ends up lying in a rubbish heap like poverty itself.[21] He is the ultimate representation of human weakness and the reason for his predicament is, even for a skeptic like Buñuel, a lack of parental protection. A similar situation of neglect, familial misunderstanding, and solitude is shown in *Rodrigo D: no futuro* and in every one of the films we have cited that follow Buñuel's example. Rodrigo (Ramiro Meneses) is opposed to the character of Adolfo, a *pistoloco* with an aggressive take on life. Adolfo carries a gun and knows he will die soon; Rodrigo is a punk rock drummer who only carries drumsticks since he cannot afford his instrument. There are no options for any of the characters, as in Stagnaro and Caetano's film. In *Cidade de Deus*, Buscapé is the only one who at the end of the movie has an option: he is able to work and, maybe, he will have a life different than the other boys. He knows it from the beginning; like a Greek hero, he foresees his future.[22]

Pedro's dream in Buñuel's film has been discussed by many critics.[23] Nonetheless, Buñuel asserts in his memoir that when he was uncertain what to add to a film, he added a dream. He could not avoid his surrealist perspective on reality, even in a film like this one, where elements of documentary abound. The use of a dream sequence and the image of the knife are the most clearly surrealist elements that

the director uses and that function as his signature and his contribution to the fictional balance that the film requires. On the other hand is the force of the documentary image, the harshness of a story that had never been told before in Latin American cinema: the crumbling, marginal, and marginalized city, where the urban and the rural are complexly interwoven, the failure of social policies, the lack of faith and the weakness of basic family bonds – ingredients that define modernity.

In Mexican society, where the woman corresponds to either the treacherous Malinche or the Virgin of Guadalupe, Pedro's mother identifies more frequently with the former. Throughout most of the film we identify her as the betrayer, given that she denies her son everything (love, food, respect) and with that betrays her own blood. She becomes an iconic modernization of the figure of the Malinche. Violated, *chingada* (Octavio Paz, 1997), the mythical traitor, she gives birth to a child who is the proof of sin and reproduces the tragedy of his conception at a national level. But Malinche produced the *mestizo* race, and whether the Mexican nation wishes to accept it or not, she is its antecedent. Pedro's mother wishes to suppress her descendant because she knows that she was forced to generate a new side of the nation: the lost race. When she realizes that she has lost her child, she goes out to find him like a shadow, a kind of Eumenide or the evolution of the Malinche into the Llorona.[24] Buñuel, it may be argued, became an astute reader of the culture that hosted him, and this complex simultaneous association of the mother with the figure of the Malinche, the *chingada*, and the woman as sacred figure probably attracted him deeply. Perhaps this fact explains his decision to include the dream sequence in the film.

Tuñón sees human bodies as the reflection of the body of the city in the film and underlines the abundance of damaged bodies: Meche's mother is ill; Pedro's mother has been raped; there are characters with disabilities like El Ciego and the man without legs, along with the dead and injured. The decaying body is associated with the body of the weak, even in the case of Jaibo, and this tendency toward portraying the marginal body as assaulted or infirm is one of the characteristics of the cinema of urban violence, as we have seen. The few adult male subjects in the film are strong and well built, while children, women, and the elderly have to combat their own various forms of powerlessness.[25]

Juan Carlos Ibáñez and Manuel Palacio summarize in one phrase one of the most important and problematic dynamics of *Los olvidados* and of all the films that follow it and have constructed the genre of urban youth and violence: "a mixture of paternal loss and maternal neglect" (Ibáñez and Palacio, 2003: 54). Among the multiple forms of betrayal that Pedro's mother inflicts on her son is Jaibo's seduction, which she encourages. Her sensually washing her legs in front of the young man and her subsequent surrender to him (suggested by the door that Jaibo closes on the viewer) are the symbolic reproduction of what the Malinche did with the enemy, according to the Mexican imaginary. If she was first the victim of rape, her adventure with Jaibo is a voluntary surrender, though her condition as *chingada* is

nonetheless unchanged. As character, Jaibo deepens his association with evil in this act of seduction. Buñuel created in Jaibo a paradigm for all Latin American cinema of urban violence, in that almost all of the positive characters possess their dramatic counterparts in figures that are their violent opposite. Buñuel attacked myths and broke down moral barriers as many art forms to that point had not. Modern Latin American cinema was born.

The cruelty of the image in Buñuel is to be found in his way of portraying the city, the slum, and the characters of *Los olvidados*. Hart reminds us of the relationship between the Mexican cinematographer Gabriel Figueroa and Buñuel and the famous anecdote in which the director asks Figueroa to leave aside his famous low-angle shots and profiles of indigenous peoples and shawled women – all images of melodrama. Buñuel had him change his cameraman's perspective in order to produce a new type of urban cinema, uprooting the melodramatic stereotypes of Latin American cinematic language: "In effect in *Los olvidados* Buñuel turned from the sky to the stones, from the lush landscape of rural Mexico to the dry concrete jungle of Mexico City, form the noble Indian savage to the real Mexico City savage, Jaibo (Roberto Cobo)" (Hart, 2004: 67).

Curiously, Buñuel, an exponent of auteur cinema that the theorists of Latin American cinema criticized, produced one of the films that best portray Latin America, satisfying critics' demands decades before they were articulated. Tuñón says that the city that Buñuel presents is plural but fragmented (Tuñón, 2003: 87), or the beginnings of the overflowing city that Jesús Martín Barbero speaks of 30 years later.[26] Gutiérrez-Albilla reminds us that *Los olvidados* is connected to social realism in its manner of presenting the "socially peripheral other [which] requires a consideration of the problem of the exclusion and social invisibility principally in modern bourgeois and savagely capitalist societies" (Gutiérrez-Albilla, 2005: 30). Or, as Monsiváis puts it, we witness the end of history, which is assumed by a fatalism that sees no alternatives, from the economic to social organization itself, inevitably making us victims (Monsiváis, 2002: 242).

Conclusion

The slum, poverty, child gangs, crime, fragmented families, and neglectful mothers (as in almost every film that follows on this theme, the paternal figure is completely absent or incompetent, like the father of Julián in *Los olvidados* or of Rodrigo in Gaviria's film) coexist in *Los olvidados* with the proletariat and with a state that idealizes a reality without perceiving that that reality has overflowed it (Martín Barbero, 1998). The slum as a space is natural, as are its characters; it is the boundary where the urban merges with the rural and where the margin crumbles on top of its own ruins. Large structures – naked, dirty, poor, and senseless – adorn the surroundings of characters that could be described with the same adjectives. There is almost no

place for play, or the children of the slum do not participate in it because they have to work (at the carousel, for example, that Pedro pushes). Education is nearly nonexistent as an institution or is ineffective while, in some films, popular culture is a stronger force (Rodrigo is attracted to punk music and culture). According to Buñuel, the characters inhabit a wild space, the modern city that has betrayed itself, just as the children betray each other; a place that many directors attempted to reproduce in its national variants. Tradition finds its place in the slum; Meche's mother attempts to cure herself through a ritual in which the sign of the cross is made with doves. Ojitos saves a tooth for luck, but to no avail. For these characters there is a complex balance between a modernity lived at the margins and tradition, a balance that Néstor García Canclini associates with the concept of hybridity.

When Pedro, like Jaibo, is killed by the police, El Ciego, who is the conservative and malignant voice that survives, says "One fewer, one fewer. That is how they all go down. I wish they had killed them all." Decades later, paramilitaries would devastate the Brazilian *favelas* and urban centers, killing homeless children in various Latin American cities, representing this line of thought. Buñuel announces, in a discourse that borders on documentary, the impossibility of many utopias that results in the death of the dreams of the weak (and even for Jaibo, whom we see as strong but who dies calling for his mother and his dog). He also presents the city as the modern Latin American space, where marginalization defies national projects and where the family is fragmented and women are constantly at risk, along with children and the elderly. It is also the space of rancor and disagreement. Buñuel's followers openly fostered the concept of dystopia, though no matter how it is formulated, in *Los olvidados* or in the films that followed it, all characters are resentful because the state has failed them and they have no hope left.

This complex film was able, well before New Latin American Cinema existed as a movement (even in theoretical form), to trace a line that defined that cinema. In other words, this movie invites us to revisit and capture the specificity of the Latin American reality. Buñuel succeeded also in laying the foundation for a genre that today seems inexhaustible, as is the case with the cinema of urban youth and violence, a genre that has rendered great cinematic achievements. Buñuel was a source of inspiration and a model to a cinema that would question the social status quo, an art of ferment that promotes reflection, and eventually, change in the multiple national realities of Latin America.

Translated by Robert S. Lesman

Notes

1 Examples of this are films like *Cidade de Deus* (Fernando Meirelles and Kátia Lund, Brazil, 2002) or *Amores perros* (Alejandro González Iñárritu, México, 2000), among others.

2 Exceptions to this rule are the Argentinian comedies of errors of the 1930s and 1940s, as well as those that were released during the Dirty War in Argentina. Cantinflas and

Tin Tán in Mexican cinema are another example. Carl J. Mora asserts that the demand was for "'family' melodramas, *comedias rancheras*, and comedies, all quite endemic to Mexican cinema since the 1930s. However, *alemanismo* generated something new: the *cabaretera* films" (Mora, 2005: 85).

3 Ignacio M. Sánchez-Prado speaks of a new exoticism in his article on Mexican film of the end of the twentieth century (Sánchez-Prado, 2006: 48), or a new invitation to read Latin American cultures in a way that leaves aside the successful formula of magical realism in order to establish a new focus of attraction on the space inhabited by violence.

4 "The first alternative to this type of cinema, which we could call the first cinema, arose with the so-called '*author's cinema*', '*nouvelle vague*', '*cinema novo*', or, conventionally, the *second cinema*. This alternative signified a step forward inasmuch as it demanded that the filmmaker be free to express himself in non-standard language and inasmuch as it was an attempt at cultural decolonization … The *second cinema* filmmaker has remained 'trapped inside the fortress' as Godard put it …" (Solanas y Getino, 1997: 42). This manifesto is originally from 1969.

5 "The film also opposes itself to dogmatic nationalist rhetoric and the visual conventions of classic Mexican cinema, which evolved as part of the visual tradition of the Revolution. Functioning both as a social documentary … [and] as a revision of the Revolutionary mythology propagated by melodramatic films during the golden age of Mexican cinema, such as the works of Emilio Fernández, *Los olvidados* has been considered an oblique precedent for a new cinema in Latin America that could be defined as *auteur* – openly militant, leftist, and formally experimental, as exemplified by the post-classical generation of Mexican, Cuban, Argentinian and Brazilian directors" (Gutiérrez Albilla, 2005: 31). (Translation by Robert S. Lesman.)

6 Ana M. López reminds us of directors like "Fernando Birri in Argentina, Nelson Pereira dos Santos in Brazil, and Julio García Espinosa and Tomás Gutiérrez Alea in Cuba, who had either trained at the Centro Spermiantale di Roma – the birthplace of Neorealism …" (López, 1997: 140).

7 "rubbish heaps, ramshackle houses, scrap piles, abandoned lots, miserable houses, places of precariousness." (Translation by Robert S. Lesman.)

8 "what happens when we are left homeless." (Translation by Robert S. Lesman.)

9 Combining techniques from Surrealism, comedy, tragedy, and documentary, Birri recognizes that "From *Tiré Dié* we passed to *Los inundados* [1961], which is already a fictional film though with a documentary base – another common stand in the new Latin American cinema, that is, the documentary support" (Birri, 1997: 96). For an analysis of the importance of Italian neorealism in Latin American cinema, see Paranaguá (2003).

10 Jáuregui and Suárez (2002: 373).

11 Mora (2005); Gutiérrez-Albilla (2005: 30). Carlos Monsiváis identifies the years as 1935 and 1955 (Monsiváis, 1993: 142).

12 "The film does not offer conclusions; it does not redeem anyone. The characters are not the incarnation of sweet souls or lay saints: the mother is consciously gendered and does not want the child, who is the product of rape" (Tuñón, 2003: 76) (Translation by Robert S. Lesman.)

13 "The modern, clean and orderly metropolis will only be real, if at all, for one social group, and it adapts in constant tension with the dominant process of urban growth.

Nonetheless, this is the metropolis that is to be desired and is presumed under *alemanismo*, which emphasizes the lights of nightclubs, the housing complexes, the viaducts, the sewage, water and electric services, the public telephones, and the wide avenues. In 1950 the city has a population of 3,480,000. It is the era of the rise of radio and cinema, where tropical rhythm and romantic *boleros* are heard; there is a whole range of sounds we do not hear in *Los olvidados*, since the music there is reduced to the songs of the blind man in the market …. The city that Buñuel represents is broken, sick and festering, like the bodies of several of the characters in the film" (Tuñón, 2003: 79–80). (Translation by Robert S. Lesman.)

14 "'Anthropological place' is formed by individual identities, through complicities of language, local references, the unformulated rules of living know-how; non-place creates the shared identity of passengers, customers or Sunday drivers" (Augé, 2008: 81).

15 The theme of pedophilia as constant risk in this social milieu is suggested on at least a few occasions (we also see Pedro facing the advances of a man on the street).

16 "I refer to the underworld of *urban terror*, of the brutal violence that populates the city and is not only police control in the streets or the exercise of discipline in the factories, but also male aggression against women, especially in poor neighbourhoods, the aggression of women against children, and the poverty of each person in each house. A mixture of fear, resentment, and vice that responds to an everyday life that is insufferable … [s]hattering the popular-romantic-folkloric image, the popular leaflet (*folletín*) speaks of the urban-popular: dirty and violent, what extends geographically from the slum to the prison, passing through insane asylums and brothels." (Translation by Robert S. Lesman.)

17 (King, 1990: 131).

18 Jean Franco analyzes the significance of milk in Buñuel's film (Franco, 1989: 157). Geoffrey Kantaris, for his part, affirms Buñuel's obsession with eyes, though his interpretation points toward the will to make visible the invisible corruption of the city (Kantaris, 2005: 41).

19 Buscapé, the positive character who is saved at the end of *Cidade de Deus*, makes his way through the *favela* throughout the film and emerges intact, though fed by a considerable new knowledge.

20 In both *Amores perros* and *Pizza, birra, faso* the directors opt for an open ending for two characters (El Chivo and Sandra, respectively), though their circumstances (the illegality of the former and the single pregnancy of the latter) are not hopeful.

21 Gutiérrez-Albilla speaks of an "aesthetics of rubbish," which opposes itself to the existing bourgeois order (Gutiérrez-Albilla, 2005: 32).

22 In her book (1989), Jean Franco explores the multiple dimensions of tragedy as a genre applicable to Buñuel's film.

23 Jean Franco speaks of the mother who is revealed in the dream as the opposite of the paternalistic state of Alemán that is embodied by the farm director (Franco, 1989: 153–154); Peter William Evans suggests the perversity of the feminine figure, also opposed to the standardized Mexican feminine image (Evans, 1995: 85–86); Julia Tuñón focuses on the destruction of bodies, a typical Buñuelian device found in the dream (Tuñón, 2003: 87); Gutiérrez-Albilla sees a correspondence between the abject and the cosmetic-feminine with regards to the dream and to the state of bodies that is associated with the projection of the modern city as extension of the physical body

(Gutiérrez-Albilla, 2005: 35); Geoffrey Kantaris sees a clear representation of abortion in the piece of raw meat, symbol of Pedro as unwanted child, and connects the image to a similar sequence in *Pixote* (Kantaris, 2005: 41).

24 In his essay "Los hijos de la Malinche," Octavio Paz associates her not only with the betrayer but also with the Virgin of Guadalupe and eventually with La Llorona. Feminist interpretations of the Malinche have shed new light on this mythical-historical Mexican figure.

25 Another association that Kantaris analyzes is the way in which Caetano and Stagnaro use in their film the sequence in which boys assault a man without legs on the street, stealing his improvised wheelchair in an act of extreme cruelty that the author reads as a tribute to Buñuel (Kantaris, 2005: 43).

26 Martín Barbero says: "An *overflowing* city both geographically and morally: its situations – invasion of lands at the periphery by squatters and invasion of downtown streets by those looking for a way to survive – actually generate new forms of law that are recognized or permitted by a state that is itself overflowing." ["Una ciudad *desbordada* en su geografía y en su moral: las situaciones de hecho – invasiones de terrenos en la periferia para habitar y de las calles del centro para hacer algo que permita sobrevivir – generan nuevas fuentes de derecho reconocidas o permitidas por un Estado a su vez desbordado"] (Martín Barbero, 1998: 272–273).

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Part Four

Strange Passions

13

The Creative Process of *Robinson Crusoe*

Exile, Loneliness, and Humanism

Amparo Martínez Herranz

The Origins of an Assignment with Potential

In 1952 Mexican cinema was at an economic and artistic standstill. Amid such stasis, however, Luis Buñuel's activity was exceptionally and especially intense. That year he directed three movies, *El bruto* (The Brute, 1953), *Robinson Crusoe*, aka *The Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1952), and *Él* (This Strange Passion, 1953), in addition to releasing another two previously produced titles: *Una mujer sin amor* (A Woman without Love, 1951) and *Subida al cielo* (Ascent to Heaven, aka Mexican Bus Ride, 1952). It was not Buñuel's original idea to carry an English literary classic such as Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) onto the big screen. The film, as the director himself acknowledged, instead resulted from an assignment: Óscar Dancigers and "some other Americans that came here" proposed he take on the project (Aub, 1985: 120). These Americans, who spoke Spanish perfectly, were the producer George Pepper and the screenwriter Hugo Butler. Both had established themselves professionally in Mexico after fleeing McCarthyism and were working under pseudonyms in order to avoid any legal complications during *Robinson Crusoe*'s eventual distribution in the USA.

At first, the idea of adapting *Robinson Crusoe* did not enthuse Buñuel. He was more interested in other Defoe novels, such as *A Journal of the Plague Year* (1722), which addressed the epidemic, along with Jean Giono's *Le Hussard sur le toit* (The Horseman on the Roof, 1951) and Camus's *La Peste* (The Plague, 1947), all allowing Buñuel to speculate and reflect on situations that turned social order into mass confusion. Such themes appealed to Buñuel's own personal situation as he himself

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was feeling uprooted and restless after witnessing the defeat of the Republic in the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939), as well as disillusioned with mankind in general as a result of the Holocaust and the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombings. Buñuel experienced these events as manifestations of civilization's failure and the triumph of chaos.[1]

Such a perspective explains his interest in *A Journal of the Plague Year*, as well as his particular approach to the cinematographic version of *Robinson Crusoe* and subsequent films. The idea of a solitary man (whether he be in a city destroyed by an epidemic or on a deserted island) who has to move forward without counting on civilization's material and moral support turns out to be fundamental to *Robinson Crusoe*. Such a scheme is also the base of *Ilegible, hijo de flauta*, a script Buñuel co-wrote with Juan Larrea (Sánchez Vidal, 1999: 178). Also, in Buñuel's later *Nazarín* (1959), the plague serves the crucial function of permitting confrontation between the divine and the human, thus causing the protagonist to reflect on the idea of failure and, for the first time, to doubt his religious beliefs. Finally, Crusoe and the plague are fused in *El ángel exterminador* (The Exterminating Angel, 1952). In this film, initially titled *The Shipwrecked on Providence Street*, ideas of isolation and broken social orders are manifest in the mysterious "quarantine" of a bourgeois group that, without knowing why, is incapable of abandoning the room in which it finds itself and remains there surrounded by an anarchistic sit-in.[2]

In spite of his initial resistance, Buñuel thus ended up sincerely interested by Defoe's story about a shipwreck. Above all, it was a project with great potential and it allowed Buñuel to work with the quality materials others had already put in motion, namely the novel and the script's first draft written by Butler. Such preambles were certainly more favorable than those of his previous assignments, such as *Gran casino*, aka *En el viejo Tampico* (Magnificent Casino, 1947), his first Mexican film and an utter fiasco, both personally and professionally. Buñuel's decision to take on this commitment, however, was largely motivated by his interest in working outside of the growing restrictions within Mexican cinema and his eagerness to try out alternative forms of production. Although he considered the project under-financed and his own labor underpaid, he decided not to negotiate and instead to reap the possible benefits of co-production with the United States. After the international success of *Los olvidados* (The Forgotten Ones, aka The Young and the Damned, 1950) and *Subida al cielo*, Buñuel felt more professionally secure and considered the assignment from Dancigers, Butler, and Pepper to be an opportunity for further progress. For these reasons he spent the first months of 1952 working quickly to finish the filming and postproduction of *El bruto*, a previous project that ended up being much less bold and daring than the script originally indicated, stifled both by Pedro Armendáriz' interpretive impositions and Buñuel's haste. Buñuel wanted to finish *El bruto* as soon as possible in order to concentrate on *Robinson Crusoe*.

Buñuel and the Blacklist: Writing the Script

Upon realizing the great potential of the project now in his hands, Buñuel decided to exercise special care in choosing the leading actor. He knew that in this sort of production, one in which the majority of the action revolves around a single character, he needed a quality interpreter and performer. Considering the film's modest budget of $300,000, however, such an actor also needed to be economically accessible.[3] Nevertheless, Buñuel intended for him to be of prestigious repute so that he could serve as a boon to the film's promotion in a market in which Buñuel remained little known.

Thus, Buñuel initially offered the role to Michael Redgrave, a British film and theatre actor who was considered to be one of the best Shakespearian interpreters of his generation and was then at the height of his career. He had worked for Hitchcock, Carol Reed, and Fritz Lang, amongst others, and had just been named best actor in the 1951 Cannes Film Festival for his work on *The Browning Version* (1951). George Pepper, one of the film's producers and a friend of Redgrave's, put Buñuel in a position to invite the actor to audition for *Robinson Crusoe*. But in 1952 Redgrave was already committed to the cinematic adaptation of Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*, directed by Anthony Asquith, and thus could not accept Buñuel's invitation. On June 6, 1952, Redgrave wrote to Buñuel thanking him for the proposal and informing him that, unless he delayed the filming, it would be impossible for him to fulfill the role of Crusoe.[4] Buñuel and his team had to look for an alternative.

Pepper and Dancigers then thought that perhaps it would be a good idea to sign Orson Welles, an actor criticized by Hollywood but simultaneously acclaimed by theatre and cinema professionals. Yet, after watching Welles act in *Macbeth* (1948), Buñuel considered him inappropriate for the role. Noticing Dan O'Herlihy playing Macduff in the same film, however, Buñuel discovered his future protagonist.[5] O'Herlihy was less well known than Redgrave or Welles but nevertheless was well qualified for the role. Additionally, his more open schedule allowed for the shooting to take place as planned, during the summer of 1952, thus taking advantage of the best season for outdoor filming (Figure 13.1).

For *Robinson Crusoe*'s pre-production Buñuel worked from Hugo Butler's (1914–1968) previous treatment of the story, which significantly informed the final script (Pérez Turrent and de la Colina, 1999: 73). This Canadian writer and Hollywood screenwriter started his career in cinema in 1937 with a film of social comment, *The Big City*, directed by Frank Borzage (Martín, 2010: 746). Butler enjoyed significant professional prestige in the United States, especially after an Oscar nomination for *Edison the Man* (1940), written with Dore Schary, and after collaborating with Jean Rendir in constructing the plot for *The Southerner* (1945). But as a member of the Communist Party, Butler was threatened by the McCarthy



Figure 13.1 Buñuel directing *Robinson Crusoe*. Courtesy of the Filmoteca Española.

witch hunts; he thus ended up exiling himself to Mexico with his wife, Jean Rouverol Butler, and some members of the Hollywood Ten, among them John Howard Lawson and Dalton Trumbo. Such circumstances and the resultant atmosphere help to situate the friendship and intellectual admiration that developed between Buñuel and Dalton Trumbo, who co-wrote the script for *Johnny Got His Gun* from 1962 to 1964 (David, 1999: 327; Martín, 2010: 778).[6]

Butler had written a first draft adaptation of Defoe's novel in Ensenada, Baja California, before arriving in Mexico. Once established there, the producer George Pepper, who had also fled the McCarthy witch hunts with his family, took on the project's realization. Though Pepper was executive secretary for the Hollywood Council of Arts, Sciences, and Professions, he was also denounced as a communist by the House of Un-American Activities Committee, thus forcing him to leave his country and find work as a producer in Mexico. For *Robinson Crusoe* he obtained money in the United States (Martín, 2010: 747) and also became involved with Dancigers and his film company, Tepeyac Films. It was possibly Pepper himself who first thought of Buñuel as a candidate to direct the film, especially with the recent success of *Los olvidados*, which they worked on together.

As was customary for Buñuel, upon accepting the assignment he immediately began collaborating on the script, this time with Butler, who went by the name of Philip Ansell Roll in the film's credits to ensure his political safety. Both

prepared a new draft throughout the spring of 1952. At this phase of the creative process, however, we can attribute the introduction and accentuation of certain elements specifically to Buñuel. From the beginning, for example, he tried to overcome the excessive religious references in Defoe's novel, aiming to avoid a literal representation of the book. Buñuel is also likely responsible for the argument with Friday about divinity, the conversion of the indigenous people to some uses of civilization, the idea of the absent feminine and, consequently, the activation of homosexual instincts. All these modifications of the first draft depended on Butler's approval, who also reconfigured and rewrote many of them (Pérez Turrent and de la Colina, 1999: 73). They then proceeded to draft the technical script, which curiously was signed only by Buñuel. It is possible that Butler did not sign in order to avoid any legal complications that may have arisen due to his being on the Hollywood blacklist. In fact, as Fernando Gabriel Martín has documented, the script sent to the United States eliminated both Butler's and Buñuel's names so as to pass through the filters of censorship, positing Philip Ansell Roll as the only signed author. The script's passing report was sanctioned by Joseph Breen himself, a puritanical censor who ended up making only six religious and moral recommendations for the text. Among them were that the text use the expression "God" with decorum and that the indigenous adequately cover their sexual organs.[7]

It was a technical script very similar to those Buñuel had been making in Mexico since the late 1940s: scripts that included a combination of technical terms in English, stage directions and dialogues in Spanish, and numerous details to guide post-production.[8] Notably, this script pays special attention to the detailed description of everything scene-related, from Crusoe's make-up and wardrobe to the decorations, and even includes minute details regarding light and materials. But the greatest emphasis was placed on soundtrack construction, including Buñuel's composition of a disturbing orchestra of variable sounds for the sequence in which Crusoe removes household goods from the coast-stranded ship: "The monotonous strike of the broken candles and pieces of mast hitting against the empty hull due to strong winds; the creaking masts, his own footsteps, the leaking water in the cabins, near and far. All these noises made an echo, as if inside a massive drum" (AB, 539: 7). The harmonization of these sounds, including that of silence, were doubtless meant to evoke feelings of capsizing and desertion that the protagonist, completely alone, could not – nor should – express with words. Sentences were thus replaced by sounds that not only adorned the sequence's action, but also accentuated the protagonist's solitariness.

All this was possible due to Buñuel and Butler's successful cooperation, which also sustained their good relationship throughout the years. In fact, they also partnered on other projects with varying fortunes. For example, they both worked on the non-filmed script for *The Cadillac* in the summer of 1952 (David, 1999: 321), throughout *Robinson Crusoe*'s long and sometimes tedious shooting. Following a request from producer George Pepper, they began writing this script based on a

news piece that recounted the story of a Cadillac that had gone over a cliff and, days later, still contained survivors. It was another story of shipwreck, survival, and hostile situations: themes that Buñuel and Butler, both being exiles themselves, knew very well. Years later, in 1959, when McCarthyism started to lose sway and power, they also collaborated on an adaptation of Evelyn Waugh's satirical novel *The Loved One*, and even planned to shoot this script in Los Angeles with Alec Guinness as the leading actor. But the project ultimately went under (Rubia Barcia, 1992: 75–77). However, they did not give up and that same year began preparations for *The Young One*, which started shooting in January of 1960 and premiered in May of that same year at the Cannes film festival, where it received the special Jury Prize (David, 1999: 325).

Both Butler and Buñuel understood the adaptation of Defoe's novel as an exercise in updating history. Generally speaking, they were loyal to the development of the protagonist's outward actions – an element that was probably there from Butler's first draft. But, in exchange, they decided to erase everything outside the experience of solitude on an island, including the beginning and end of the novel. And, inside the island plot, they cut sequences that disrupted the story's fluency or entailed excessive production costs. They dispensed with situations, for example, that required the construction of complex settings (the underground cavern that was supposed to be a warehouse) or the shooting of difficult takes (the shipwreck near the island or the boarding of the boat moored near the beach). They also eliminated scenes that required very laborious settings (the earthquakes that took place right after Crusoe arrived onto the island) or filming in locations that vastly raised production costs (Crusoe's captivity in Salé or his liberation and subsequent settling in Brazil).

Furthermore, by discarding the first and third parts of the novel, Butler and Buñuel proposed that that the story's altered meaning lay in the action that had converted Crusoe into a cultural myth. Taking out the novel's final part meant omitting Defoe's materialist speech, which originally rendered the protagonist a perfect bourgeois, while eliminating the novel's beginning also discarded with Crusoe's sinful past. This revised starting point was thus a rejection of all *Robinson Crusoe*'s religious references. Butler and Buñuel instead preferred to emphasize the moments in which Crusoe expressed doubt in God: doubt that eventually becomes rebellion.

In broad terms, they proposed an adaptation that followed the literary original's plot but altered the signification of this plot's events. In other words, they intentionally and eloquently changed the meaning of collective history and Crusoe's myth itself. For both Butler and Buñuel understood that the adaptation they were undertaking entailed more transformation than transcription, and in this transformational detour they suggested that the castaway's exile was not a form of atonement but rather an opportunity to discover himself and rid himself of social and moral ties that prevented him from freedom (Monegal, 1993: 117, 133).

From slavery to fraternity

An especially noteworthy change that Butler and Buñuel made in their rereading and rewriting of Defoe's original story regards the essential elements of the cohabitation of Crusoe and Friday. They made it so that their relationship changed from slavery to fraternity, from nineteenth-century imperialism to postcolonialism. Defoe wrote his novel in 1719, a historical moment dominated by the idea of vigorous and economically efficient colonialism. The British Empire, in expansion since the fourteenth century, had by then converted Britain into a world power. Buñuel, in contrast, brought the adventures of the shipwrecked Crusoe to the screen in 1952, during a time of decolonization following the independence of Lebanon, Libya, Korea, Philippines, Laos, Indonesia, Jordan, Israel, India, and Pakistan, among other places. In addition, the likelihood of creating additional free nations was on the horizon (Cambodia, Vietnam, Sudan, Tunisia, and Morocco). To fully understand the discrepancies between Defoe's and Buñuel's worldviews and their consequently different portrayals of Crusoe, however, it is necessary to consider numerous elements. Among them are the influence of Rousseau's texts; America's Independence; the Marquis de Sade's work; the triumph of the French Revolution; Kipling's literature, which abounds with the myth of the noble savage and benevolent Empire, in contrast to that of Conrad, who critiques colonial abuses; Freud's investigations and the discovery of new subconscious worlds; and finally, the powerful moral and political effects of two world wars. In this margin of time, one passes from the unequal relations raised by Defoe, where the slave (Friday) docilely complies with and submits to the superiority of his master (Crusoe), to the brotherly relation proposed by Buñuel. This filmmaker thus offers a deep reflection on the surprise and joy of discovering the "other" to be a distinct human being, yet equal in abilities and rights. According to Buñuel, this is Crusoe's real conquest and conversion. Both the script and the film therefore uproot the attitude of distrust displayed in Defoe's literary original. Crusoe's originally arrogant behavior toward Friday, for example, was carefully referenced in the screenplay's first pages, in some cases with an abundant dose of Buñuelian irony. Such irony is especially apparent when Friday is frightened by the smoke from Crusoe's pipe, a moment annotated in the text with:

> Due to his worsening sense of defense, Robinson never missed an opportunity to "stage" himself as a superior being before the savage …. With an expression that tries to be Jupiterian, he inhales deeply [while Friday] contemplates his lord as he desires him to: with respect and fear, the same way that religions demand the contemplation of God to be. (AB, 539: 65)

Such authoritarian gestures reach an extreme when Crusoe decides to shackle Friday because he considers him false and disloyal. In the technical script, Crusoe's mistrust is exaggerated so as to appear a ridiculous obsession. Once this mistrust is

overcome, however, the relation between the castaway and Friday is one of two coexistent comrades sharing tasks around their island home. Butler and Buñuel's adaptation of Defoe's original thus strategically emphasizes the importance and value of this fraternity. In this sense, it is worth noting Buñuel's particular concern for the audiovisual, himself having made numerous changes during filming that aimed to underline this idea, this relation. While the film's screenplay retained many mistrustful and submissive gestures, Buñuel withdrew many of these gestures during shooting and editing. A good example of such changes is his reconstruction of the sequence in which Friday returns from the sea after hunting for fish. Initially the screenplay indicated that while Friday struggled to fish, Crusoe should be "lying lazily on the beach" (AB, 539: 76). But in the process of preparing for shooting, Buñuel decided to replace Crusoe's inaction with cooperation, having him "fixing a net instead of idling" (AB, 539: 76) and adding: "We always shared the work and this made it more effective" (AB, 539: 76). Buñuel hereby makes their new relation of a fraternal partnership vigorously explicit. By discarding the novel's first part, Butler and Buñuel were also able to discard that part's discourse on ownership – in short, Crusoe's colonial vocation – and thus managed to present Friday as a friend, not a possession. In fact, Friday ends up overcoming Crusoe, for it is he who frees Crusoe to behave as an interlocutor instead of a master: "They meet again as proud men" (Kyrou, 1962; Buache, 1976).

The Shooting and the Script: Nature, Specters, and Instincts

Robinson Crusoe's filming was one of the longest of Luis Buñuel's career, primarily due to the difficulties of shooting in color. It began July 14, 1952 and entailed more than three months of work. In his notes on the film, Dan O'Herlihy speaks of 16 weeks of shooting, 11 of which took place in Manzanillo. Heat made the work especially hard for O'Herlihy, who already carried all the story's dramatic weight.[9] It did not finish until the beginning of October.[10] Outdoor shooting took place in Salagua, a delegation of Manzanillo on Mexico's Pacific coast; and in the forest of Chapultex, in Mexico City; and also in the gully of San José de Purúa. Meanwhile the indoor work, meaning scenes taking place in the cave or inside the palisade, was filmed in the Tepeyac de México DF studios. The whole process was delayed by the use of color, since no Mexican laboratory was yet prepared to work with this type of film and the negative therefore had to be sent daily to Los Angeles. The use of Pathé color in 1952 was a small advance, but it nevertheless represented a significant novelty within Buñuel's cinematographic production as he had never directed under this system before. Such color gave the film, even if just in appearance, the air of a conventional and highly popular Hollywood adventure film (Monegal, 1993: 120).

But the problems with color were not only the result of using a new technique. Above all, they were due to professional disagreement between Buñuel and

Alex Phillips, the director of cinematography with whom Buñuel had recently collaborated on the making of *Subida al cielo*. Phillips was most responsible for the work's delay during filming. He ran very late in preparing every session and there were some days in Manzanillo when only a single take was accomplished. Additionally, Phillips' criteria, tending toward the beautiful and the picturesque, did not match Buñuel's aesthetic principles. Phillips maintained that cinematography was an art like painting. In various interviews he stressed this particular idea: "When I photograph, I always have a painter in mind from the start. First I began with Tintoretto, who is almost impossible photographically, as is Orozco …, they obtain their perspectives through light; for this one would need a week just to illuminate certain aspects of the set" (Alba, 2007: 1). It was precisely these creative precepts that unnerved Buñuel, who ended up sarcastically accusing Phillips of being a specialist in close-ups (Pérez Turrent and de la Colina, 1999: 78). When some critics tried to attribute the use of a personal palette of colors to Buñuel after *Robinson Crusoe*'s premiere, the director thus rejected such affirmation: "A Buñuel palette doesn't exist! It is instead Alex Phillips" (Pérez Turrent and de la Colina, 1999: 78).

The discipline of preparation and the vicissitudes of filming

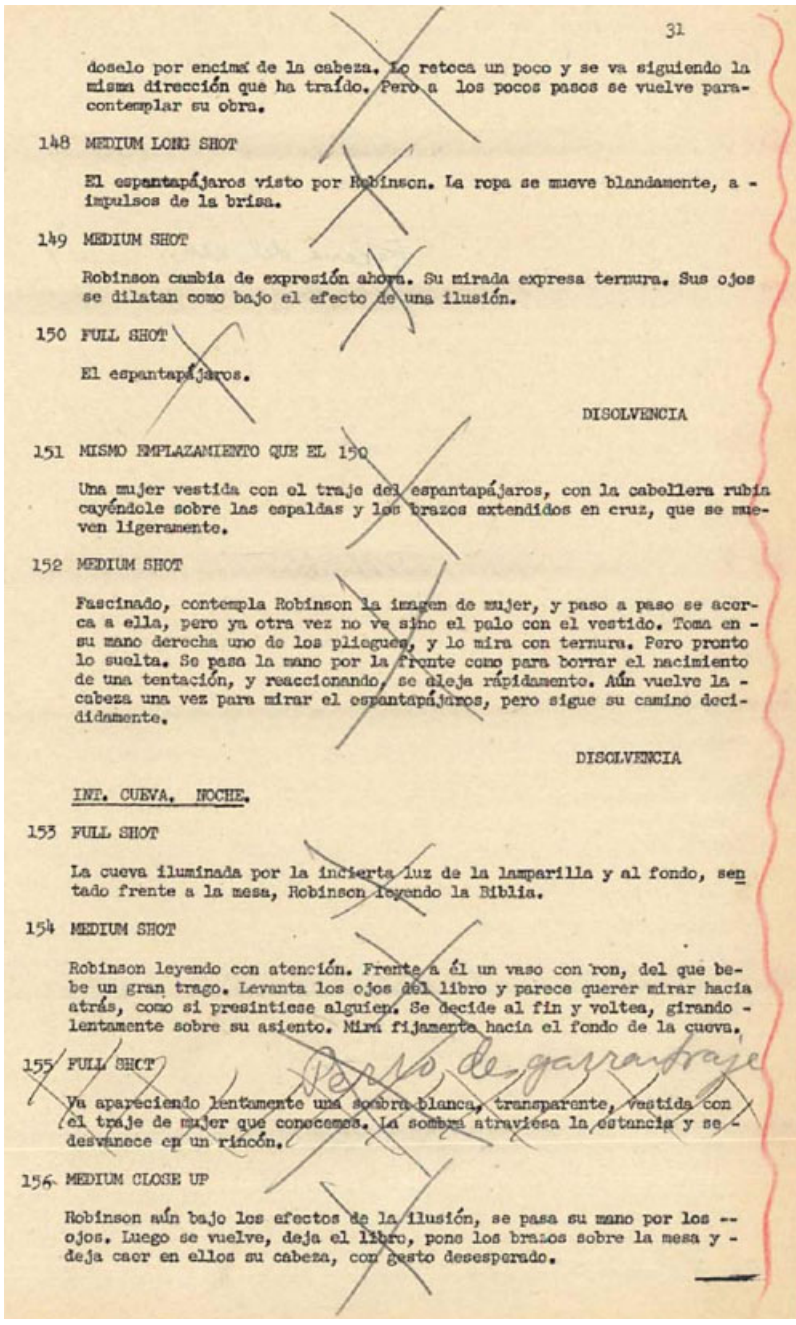
From the beginning of his career as a director, Buñuel adopted the custom of preparing every working day's schedule with extreme diligence. He spent the night or dawn before each filming making corrections to the typed screenplay. This task was especially prominent during the making of *Robinson Crusoe*. Before even beginning filming, for example, Buñuel's numerous deletions of entire takes and even sequences added up to about a tenth of the original plans on paper. Such omissions hardly altered the rhythm and meaning of the story because, in almost all cases, they were instead designed to simplify the work in terms of time and money. In exchange, the director added new pieces to the film: shots that were more detailed than those originally planned, as well as some particularly Buñuelian touches. In addition to subtracting or adding to the script, he also made abundant variations. He modified the film's plans repeatedly in regards to both the order and scale of takes, as well as the organizational breakdown of every sequence. These changes altered the content and, on occasion, the meaning of passages. Among the more drastic changes to the story's content and meaning is an alteration of the sequence in which Crusoe, having just arrived on the island, tries to eat eggs from a nest he finds upon climbing a tree. In the typescript version, he finds the eggs to be rotten upon opening them, thus throwing the nest to the ground with anger and despair. During shooting, however, Buñuel decided that Crusoe would discover not rotten eggs but a baby chicken carefully attempting to leave its shell and nest. This alteration is revealing in the sense that Buñuel transforms an originally hostile first contact with nature to a more hopeful experience, thereby rendering

Crusoe not doomed to the island but, rather, ready to integrate himself into a new ecosystem. Buñuel made many reforms in this vein, thus dominating the final typescript but nevertheless remaining strongly influenced by Butler's initial draft of the story. However, he hardly modified such plans during the filming process itself: another characteristic behavior of Buñuel. Improvisations were made during shooting only when they did not affect production costs. Following these guidelines, he ostentatiously hung a piece of meat in Crusoe's cave during a scene in which the protagonist muses about his loneliness. This exercise of visual estrangement was replicated soon after in *La ilusión viaja en tranvía* (Illusion Travels by Streetcar, 1953), where upon composing a frame he decided to hang a pig's head over a copy of *Ecce Homo*.

Buñuel was not comfortable during *Robinson Crusoe*'s filming, as during editing, he felt he could not control certain facets of the creative process as much as he had done on other occasions. Such discomfort was primarily due to the difficulty of filming outdoors, along with the inexperience of filming in color and the "excessive protagonism" of Phillips, the director of photography. Perhaps because of all this, it was the first script by Mexican directors to systematically alter the typescripted plans for dialogue and other soundtrack elements. Interestingly, however, such changes were not made during the actual filming but rather during the work's preparation, thus making the whole shooting process much longer than originally projected. Though Buñuel's changes were intended, as usual, to simplify production, such editing tendencies were exercised in extreme during this film.

Woman as ghost

Only occasionally did script alterations made during planning or filming diminish the importance of certain roles and themes, one such theme being nostalgia for the feminine. Against Defoe's sexually indolent version of Crusoe, Butler and Buñuel proposed a man who missed society and human company, including female companions. This represented at the same time the nostalgia around the material (carnal) and the emotional (company, complicity etc.). From the beginning, the longing for the feminine was projected as a constant that would be reiterated through different images. For example, Crusoe discovers "a woman's white dress" within a trunk among other ship remnants (AB, 539: 23). In another sequence, Friday dresses in feminine clothes as if it were a game. The female dress, in this example and others, thus has a metaphoric and metonymic character. Both introduce an aspect Defoe intended to avoid: Crusoe's sexual life on the island (Monegal, 1993: 203). Such sexuality, for example, is precisely what emerges during the sequence in which Crusoe builds a scarecrow not with dead birds meant to scare living birds, which happens in the novel, but with women's clothes. Upon seeing the dress billowing among his crops, the castaway experiences great nostalgia. This scene was originally followed by a series of hallucinations that were not included in the film's final



31

doselo por encima de la cabeza. Lo retoca un poco y se va siguiendo la misma dirección que ha traído. Pero a los pocos pasos se vuelve para contemplar su obra.

148 MEDIUM LONG SHOT

El espantapájaros visto por Robinson. La ropa se mueve blandamente, a impulsos de la brisa.

149 MEDIUM SHOT

Robinson cambia de expresión ahora. Su mirada expresa ternura. Sus ojos se dilatan como bajo el efecto de una ilusión.

150 FULL SHOT

El espantapájaros.

DISOLVENCIA

151 MISMO EMPLAZAMIENTO QUE EL 150

Una mujer vestida con el traje del espantapájaros, con la cabellera rubia cayéndole sobre las espaldas y los brazos extendidos en cruz, que se mueven ligeramente.

152 MEDIUM SHOT

Fascinado, contempla Robinson la imagen de mujer, y paso a paso se acerca a ella, pero ya otra vez no ve sino el palo con el vestido. Toma en su mano derecha uno de los pliegues, y lo mira con ternura. Pero pronto lo suelta. Se pasa la mano por la frente como para borrar el nacimiento de una tentación, y reaccionando, se aleja rápidamente. Aún vuelve la cabeza una vez para mirar el espantapájaros, pero sigue su camino decididamente.

DISOLVENCIA

INT. CUEVA. NOCHE.

153 FULL SHOT

La cueva iluminada por la incierta luz de la lamparilla y al fondo, sentado frente a la mesa, Robinson leyendo la Biblia.

154 MEDIUM SHOT

Robinson leyendo con atención. Frente a él un vaso con ron, del que bebe un gran trago. Levanta los ojos del libro y parece querer mirar hacia atrás, como si presintiese alguien. Se decide al fin y voltea, girando lentamente sobre su asiento. Mira fijamente hacia el fondo de la cueva.

155 FULL SHOT

Va apareciendo lentamente una sombra blanca, transparente, vestida con el traje de mujer que conocemos. La sombra atraviesa la estancia y se desvanece en un rincón.

156 MEDIUM CLOSE UP

Robinson aún bajo los efectos de la ilusión, se pasa su mano por los ojos. Luego se vuelve, deja el libro, pone los brazos sobre la mesa y deja caer en ellos su cabeza, con gesto desesperado.

Figure 13.2 Page of the shooting script indicating the hallucinations and the presence of the woman in the cave that was cut. Courtesy of the Filmoteca Española.

version (Figure 13.2). The first of these hallucinations was Crusoe perceiving the scarecrow as "a woman dressed in the costume of a scarecrow, with blond hair falling over her back and her arms outstretched, moving slightly" (AB, 539: 31). Shortly thereafter, while reading the Bible and drinking rum in his cave in order to rid himself of such disturbing thoughts, Crusoe has another vision, which Buñuel decided to delete just before shooting: "a white, transparent shadow slowly appears, dressed in the garb of women we know. The shadow crosses the room and vanishes in a corner" (AB, 539: 31). All these illusions were meant to plunge Crusoe into a state of despair, leading him to confront the apparition with angry words. Such scenes did not make the film's final cut, however, and Buñuel instead chose images of Crusoe uneasy with the realization that five years have already passed, thus having little expectation of change and accompanied only by his dog Rex, who is also upset because he cannot eat the meat hanging at the entrance of the cave. Loneliness and anxiety thus continue to palpitate but under other vestiges.

Though Buñuel deleted the takes of the phantasmal woman, he tied images with similar form and content into other films with which he was involved. Notable antecedents include lady Madeleine "with her stained and torn white dress, shreds of light silk dragging" (Sánchez Vidal, 1993: 42) in *La Chute de la Maison Usher* (The Fall of the House of Usher, 1928) directed by Jean Epstein, a film for which Buñuel was an assistant director, and the description of the girlfriend of *La novia de los ojos deslumbrados*, written by Buñuel and Rubia Barcia in 1945, who appears in a successive, spectral manner nearly identical to that drafted by Buñuel for *Robinson Crusoe*. Also, an elusive girlfriend comically emerges in both *El gran calavera* (The Great Madcap, 1949), *Subida al cielo*, and in a more dramatic tone in both *Abismos de pasión*, aka *Cumbres Borrascosas* (*Wuthering Heights*, 1954) and *Viridiana* (1961). But in all these cases we are dealing with the sublimation of the feminine: the representation of women as being desired and unattainable, virginal and mysterious, halfway between the angelic and the eerie. This is a visual construction that allows Buñuel effectively to address one of his favorite themes: the binomial *eros–thanatos*, a constant in his cinematic and literary work. As Buñuel states: "The lonely man looks for another he cannot find, and thus must invent her, or dress a scarecrow or lovingly murder a mannequin, or worship a drugged niece" (de la Colina, 1961: 66).

A reunion with nature

Despite being alone, Crusoe is free on the island and thus to some degree becomes a recreation of the myth of Adam in Paradise, though without Eve (Martín, 2010: 757). The role of animals as companions, antagonists, or part of the natural environment into which Crusoe integrates himself was already very important in the script's proposed treatment of the story. And although their presence was reduced as a result of the deletions made before and during filming, there were still numerous elements linked to this topic; enough to show that it was an essential part of

the film. *Robinson Crusoe* addresses the encounter between man, nature, and the realm of instincts in a positive and educational sense. During the production process a few shots featuring animals (rats, wasps, turtles, etc.) were removed, and howls, barks, and bird cries were replaced by a conventional musical background for the movie's soundtrack. But some very expressive images nevertheless remain, including that of a spider exiting an empty water jug while Crusoe endures a fever. It is a spider very similar to that of *Susana*, aka *Carne y demonio* (Susana, aka The Devil and the Flesh, 1951), in the sense that both appear during a protagonist's moments of extreme loneliness and despair. A scorpion was also integrated into the film at the last minute, functioning to enrich the start of the sequence in which the castaway strives to build a scarecrow dressed in women's clothing. This is another distinctly Buñuelian element, the director having already used it in *L'Âge d'or* (The Golden Age, 1930) and planning on using it in scripts such as *Susana*. In all of these films we can understand the scorpion in relation to instinct and sex, especially in *Robinson Crusoe* since it was meant to precede his dreams of the spectral woman.

By the constant presence of images such as these, Buñuel vindicates nature's educational potential, as did Rousseau (*The Social Contract*, 1762; *Émile, or On Education*, 1762), while also defending the virtues of instinct as a liberating force, in line with the work of Jean-Henri Fabre and Maurice Maeterlinck.

In this sense, one of the most significant animal presences of the film is that of ants, particularly the antlions that Crusoe plays with during his tour of the island and whose larvae is offered as sacrifice in several ant colonies. The species' presence was carefully planned in the screenplay. In it Buñuel showed, once again, his high degree of entomological scholarship: "Robinson releases the hymenopterous that falls, rolling off the faces of the inverted cone until reaching the apex" (AB, 539, 50). The antlion is a variety very common to Mexico and South America, so its presence, in addition to meeting Buñuel's interest in this type of animal, is also fully justified by the story's general context. At the same time it served to highlight the close relationship that Crusoe had established with the island at which he arrived 18 years earlier, thus becoming a knowledgeable master seeming to control the life and activities of its inhabitants. All this transpires, however, just before the sequence that reveals the protagonist walking along the beach and finding the trace of a human foot. The relationship between the antlion's sand pit and the footprint is already obvious but the connection between these scenes becomes even closer when we find out that these humans are cannibals who eat each other, much like the way antlions feed on other ants. The close attention that Buñuel paid to these themes can be explained by his well-known enthusiasm for the animal world in general and insects in particular. For him, insects more than any other species best represent the world of instincts, the value of survival, and the virtues of spontaneity. Thus, after reading texts by Maeterlinck such as *La Vie des termites* (The Life of Termites, 1927) and those by Fabre (*Mœurs des insectes* [Custom of the Insects, 1911]; *Les Merveilles de l'instinct chez les insectes* [The Marvels of the Instinct

in the Insects, 1913]), his conclusion was that it was necessary to have these animals in his cinema because in them everything is contained and addressed, from Shakespeare to de Sade (Sánchez Vidal, 1993: 101, 106).

The Rewriting of the Script during Editing and Dubbing

It is worth noting that *Robinson Crusoe* was the first title made by Buñuel in Mexico in which he systematically addressed the screenplay, dialogue, and other elements in relation to the soundtrack. Such planning and altering occurred during various stages of the creative process, including the editing. Yet while Buñuel coordinated and participated in the editing of the film, he apparently did not intervene in all matters relating to the choice and placement of music (Buñuel and Butler, 2002: 185). *Robinson Crusoe*'s score was created by the conductor and British composer Anthony Collins (1893–1963), who in 1940 created the soundtrack for the cinematic adaptation of another castaway story, *The Swiss Family Robinson*, narrated by Edward Ludwig (1940) and adapted from Johann David Wyss's novel of the same name, *Der Schweizerische Robinson* (1812). Collins made a fairly conventional score, composed to the measure of action in order to underscore the story's emotional atmosphere. Buñuel, in contrast, generally attempted to avoid integrating music with images and thus probably did not much like Collins's work for *Robinson Crusoe*.

Additionally, after working on the voice-over, numerous changes were made to the screenplay during the assembly and audio editing processes. Although the essence of its contents and meaning did not change, hardly any utterance is recited in the film as it is planned on paper. New sentences were added, such as those accompanying the first frames in which Crusoe explains how his life had been up to the moment of the shipwreck. Moreover, monologue commentary was added to practically all the following scenes during assembly and dubbing, which broke with the original plans for predominant silence. Perhaps this occurred because the movie would have been strange and difficult to understand without accompanying explanations. At the same time, however, such commentary neglected the opportunity of using silence's weight as a way of conveying the true severity of Crusoe's situation.

During editing, the order and planning of numerous sequences was also changed in order to adjust everything that Buñuel had failed to control during the troubled shooting in Manzanillo and also to better use the filmed material, which sometimes lacked the desired quality. Probably one of the most significant changes in this direction was made during the sequence in which Crusoe calls out to the mountains, only to hear the echo of his own voice. Originally it was supposed to follow images conveying his nostalgia for the feminine, particularly the scenes about the female scarecrow and ensuing hallucinations (Figure 13.3). But



Figure 13.3 Crusoe, solitude, and longing for the feminine in *Robinson Crusoe*. Óscar Dancigers Productions and Producciones Tepeyac.

during editing, this scene's position was delayed in order to further emphasize Crusoe's feelings of loneliness, instead placing the take with the echo after the death of the dog Rex. Thus the desperate gesture of speaking to the mountains in order to hear the sound of a voice, even if it is just his own echo, happens at the film's fortieth minute, here serving as an epilogue to the film's first block of narrative history. With changes like these Buñuel tried to balance the film's narrative structure, adjusting time and its contents into two connected blocks. The first block chronicles Crusoe's arrival on the island, his adaptation to the environment, and the difficulties of loneliness. The second block entails the discovery of other island habitants and the formation of Crusoe's relationship with Friday, experienced as a personal re-education. Buñuel uses the sequence of the footprint in the sand as a hinge with which to unite the two blocks. In Defoe's novel, Crusoe discovers the mark as an almost satanic and disturbing sign amid an otherwise stable and productive time of his island life. In the film, however, he instead finds the imprint after a period of discouragement and dejection, almost annihilated by loneliness. Upon seeing it, he thus becomes fearful but also curious and hopeful about the possibility of meeting another person. Defoe considered the encounter with Friday to be part of Crusoe's bourgeois learning process (Monegal, 1993: 134). Yet for Buñuel, thanks to this scene, Friday becomes Crusoe's salvation: the personification of numerous possibilities and values arising from human coexistence.

To all these variations we should add those arising from there being two different film versions, one in English and another in Spanish, which were shot simultaneously. The first shots were filmed in English, which Buñuel prioritized, and then they shot the corresponding scenes in Spanish. The first negative was for Pepper and the second for Dancigers; this way they were able to justify legally and economically that the film was a co-production. As Ferrán Alberich has noted, the difference in length between the two versions is very small – just a few seconds (Martín, 2010: 752) – and resulted from deleting some clips of Crusoe's feverish delirium from the English version.

In fact, the substantial disparity between the two versions lies not in the footage or images, but in the accompanying dubbing. To appreciate the range of options he had and his consequent decision, one has to consider that Buñuel worked as a professional dubber for Warner Hollywood and therefore knew the techniques and mechanisms necessary for making changes. As will be examined, he consciously used such skills to make the rebellion against God less severe in the English version than in the Spanish version. Perhaps Buñuel feared the rigor of the American censors during the McCarthy era and thus tried to avoid it by dubbing. It is worth remembering that José Rubia Barcia, Buñuel's co-worker at Warner's Spanish Dubbing Unit and also one of his great friends, had been imprisoned in the summer of 1953 on accusations of being a communist.

Solitude as disaster and rebellion against God

Buñuel was most interested in *Robinson Crusoe*'s story of solitude and reencounter with man, thereby serving as a valuable metaphor for exile (García Riera, 1973: 63; Martín, 2010: 745). While Defoe's Crusoe feels like a prisoner, that of Buñuel feels more alone, more lonely. In the literary text there is a constant yearning for freedom, while in the film this longing is for the companionship of other humans. Perhaps this can be partially explained by the differences between Defoe's and Buñuel's religious cultures. Defoe, educated within Puritanism and the principles of religious individualism, considered solitude to be a privilege that facilitated one's encounter with God. As Defoe put into the mouth of his own character in *Serious Reflections During The life and surprising adventures of Robinson Crusoe: with His Vision of the angelick world* (1720), solitude "is no cause for grief as long as the man uses his soul's voice to talk with God and his own self" (Defoe, 1720: 3). Buñuel, in contrast, was educated in Catholic values emphasizing the collective experience of religion, and thus identified solitude as the worst of misfortunes. When Buñuel's Crusoe gets ready to leave the island after 28 years of exile, he thus reminds the remaining imprisoned rioters that at least they will have the company of each other: "It is something for which I have shed many tears, for which I have experienced terrible anguish and endless moments of despair. You all have friends with whom you can talk, with whom you can endure misfortune! You have MAN!" (AB, 539: 92).

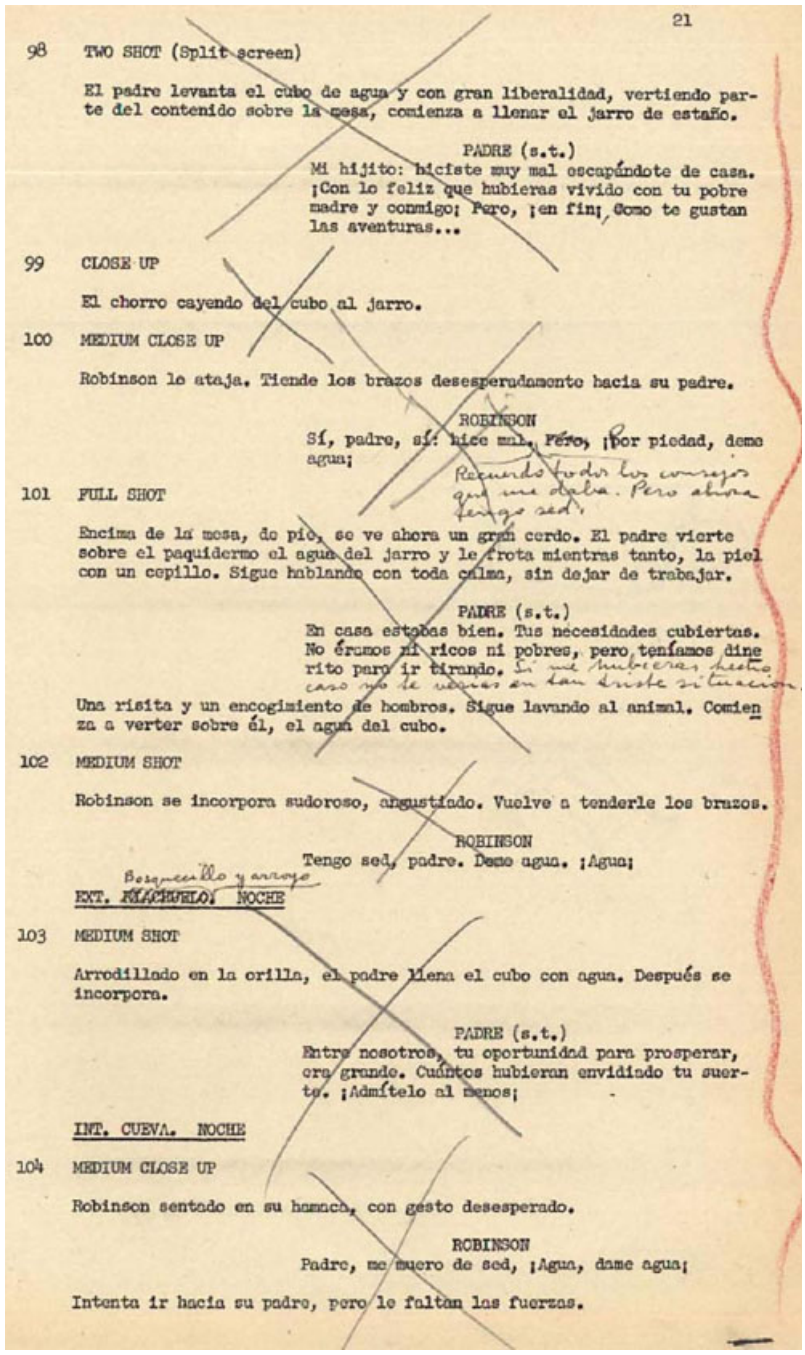
The writer Jonathan Franzen recently returned to the myth of Robinson Crusoe in talking about the loneliness and tragic suicide of his friend and fellow writer David Foster Wallace, who believed that fiction was the best solution to the problem of existential loneliness (Franzen, 2011). By comparing the castaway's fate with that of Foster Wallace, Franzen concludes that Defoe's Crusoe "is able to survive because he is lucky: he makes peace with his condition, because he is an ordinary person and his island is concrete. David, who was an extraordinary person, and whose island was virtual instead, in the end did not have anything other than the interest in surviving" (Punti, 2011: 1). To this we can perhaps add that Buñuel's Crusoe also survives thanks to his encounter with others, thereby being released from the fictitious company of God and instead being reunited with man.

Such sentiment is highly evident in the echo sequence, which not only changed position during the film's assembly but also had different contents in the English and Spanish versions. In the English version, Crusoe recites an excerpt from Psalm 22 in the Bible that speaks of God as the Good Shepherd: "In fresh grass meadows he makes me lie, / He leads me beside still waters and restores my strength" (Psalm 23 (22): 1052–1053). This is a passage traditionally used by Protestants during funeral services. Introducing a tremendously revelatory change during the dubbing process, however, the words that Crusoe throws against the mountains in the Spanish version instead are from the Book of Wisdom:

> Short and sad is our life, there is no remedy for the man when he comes to an end; we know no one who has returned from the abyss. We came into this world by chance, and then it will be as if we had never existed. … So, let's enjoy the present as creatures of youthful passion. Let's intoxicate ourselves with exquisite wines and perfumes, and let not even a spring flower escape us. (Book of Wisdom, 2: 1–7)

Put into the mouths of the impious, such ideas become an act of rebellion against God. It is worth noting, moreover, that these lines are the same as those the old man reads to a child in *Abismos de pasión*, a film Buñuel shot while preparing the dubbing of *Robinson Crusoe*. It is a biblical passage that he liked to consider one of the strongest arguments for atheism, paradoxically contained within the Christians' holy book yet closely related to the ideas raised by Marquis de Sade in *Dialogue between a preteen et le moribond* (Dialogue between a Priest and a Dying Man, 1782). In sequences such as that of the echo or the conversation between Friday and Crusoe on God and the Devil, the spirit more than the wording of de Sade's work is easily noticeable, thus demonstrating signification transformations of the original work as well (Sánchez Vidal, 1993: 235).

Defoe's religious education, taking place within the dissenting sect of Presbyterianism (Watt, 1999: 160), partly explains the penitential value he gave to Crusoe's solitude, believing it facilitated his encounter with God. Buñuel, however, started considering other premises more closely related to humanism, as well as work by Freud and de Sade. For Buñuel, Crusoe's solitude leads not to



21

98 TWO SHOT (Split screen)

El padre levanta el cubo de agua y con gran liberalidad, vertiendo parte del contenido sobre la cesa, comienza a llenar el jarro de estaño.

PADRE (s.t.)
Mi hijito: hiciste muy mal escapándote de casa. ¡Con lo feliz que hubieras vivido con tu pobre madre y conmigo; Pero, ¡en fin; Como te gustan las aventuras...

99 CLOSE UP

El chorro cayendo del cubo al jarro.

100 MEDIUM CLOSE UP

Robinson le ataja. Tiende los brazos desesperadamente hacia su padre.

ROBINSON
Sí, padre, sí: hice mal. Pero, ¡por piedad, deme agua;
Recuerdo todos los consejos que me daba. Pero ahora tengo sed.

101 FULL SHOT

Encima de la mesa, de pie, se ve ahora un gran cerdo. El padre vierte sobre el paquidermo el agua del jarro y le frota mientras tanto, la piel con un cepillo. Sigue hablando con toda calma, sin dejar de trabajar.

PADRE (s.t.)
En casa estabas bien. Tus necesidades cubiertas. No éramos ni ricos ni pobres, pero teníamos dinero para ir tirando. Si me hubieras hecho caso no te verías en tan triste situación

Una risita y un encogimiento de hombros. Sigue lavando al animal. Comienza a verter sobre él, el agua del cubo.

102 MEDIUM SHOT

Robinson se incorpora sudoroso, angustiado. Vuelve a tenderle los brazos.

ROBINSON
Tengo sed, padre. Deme agua. ¡Agua;

Bosquecillo y arroyo
EXT. ~~RIACHUELO.~~ NOCHE

103 MEDIUM SHOT

Arrodillado en la orilla, el padre llena el cubo con agua. Después se incorpora.

PADRE (s.t.)
Entre nosotros, tu oportunidad para prosperar, era grande. Cuántos hubieran envidiado tu suerte. ¡Admítelo al menos;

INT. CUEVA. NOCHE

104 MEDIUM CLOSE UP

Robinson sentado en su hamaca, con gesto desesperado.

ROBINSON
Padre, me muero de sed, ¡Agua, dame agua;

Intenta ir hacia su padre, pero le faltan las fuerzas.

Figure 13.4 Page of the shooting script describing Crusoe's dream of his father. Courtesy of the Filmoteca Española.

repentance but to rebellion: to facing God as a hardly merciful father. Thus the film contains phrases taken literally from the novel alongside other completely anti-Defoe phrases that question Christian dogmas. It is in this atmosphere that Crusoe, sick and alone, has to confront the father figure as a specter, for Buñuel and Butler completely transformed the dream mentioned in the novel. In Defoe's work, the castaway envisions a being surrounded by a halo of fire who wants to spear him for having not repented for the error of his ways. Buñuel and Butler, however, turned all this into a rather different delirium. In the midst of a fever crisis and without any water in his jar – it only contains a spider – Crusoe has a rather different hallucination. His father appears to him, making reproaches in a sardonic tone (Figure 13.4). The situation's cruelty reaches an extreme, however, when the castaway, with arms outstretched, asks his father for water and his father denies him, instead wastefully using it to wash a pig. This is a good example of the strategies Buñuel and Butler used throughout the process of adapting the novel. Another way by which they proceeded was changing the direction of the nightmare, making it more Freudian than Christian.

According to Buñuel's remarks in numerous forums, this scene was the result of fortunate improvisation during filming. But he was not telling the truth. Crusoe's dream of his father, which was detailed to a tee in the script, is at once terrifying and ironic. Butler and Buñuel altered the religious content of the literary original by substituting the figure of God with a cruel, laughing father. Buñuel took up this theme not only in *Robinson Crusoe* but also through the specter of the Commander in his celebrations of *Tenorio* and in *Le Charme discret of the bourgeoisie* (The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie, 1972). As Agustín Sánchez Vidal has highlighted, thanks to all these variations *Robinson Crusoe* ends up being a film that manages to illustrate in an exemplary manner the relations between father and son "as an echo of that which is established between Christ and God the Father, between man and divinity, and even between man and nature" (Sánchez Vidal, 1993: 177).

The Film's Release and Reception

Robinson Crusoe premiered on July 18, 1954 at the Normandie Theatre in New York, and with great success. In the United States, it was advertised as a title for the whole family, especially aimed at young audiences considered to be natural readers of Defoe's novel. The actor Dan O'Herlihy made a very important effort to promote the film in the States, an effort that later resulted in an Oscar nomination for his portrayal of Crusoe.[11] This recognition meant a boost to O'Herlihy's career in Hollywood even though he had little chance of winning, for at the time he was scarcely known in Hollywood and also was up against a cadre of hard-to-beat nominees including Humphrey Bogart (*The Caine Mutiny*), Bing Crosby (*The Country Girl*), James Mason (*A Star is Born*), and Marlon Brando (*On The Waterfront*), who ended up winning.

Buñuel remained in the background throughout *Robinson Crusoe*'s promotion. Nevertheless, he was quite pleased with the end result, though he very seldom expressed such satisfaction openly.[12] By the film's premiere Buñuel was already involved in other assignments. Between January and February 1954, he had shot *El rio y la muerte* (The River and Death, 1954) and then had to supervise its assembling and editing. Additionally, he was supervising the promotion of *Abismos de pasión*, which premiered on July 3, 1954, and *La ilusión viaja en tranvía*, which was released in Mexico on July 18, 1954, the same date as *Robinson Crusoe*'s debut in New York (David, 1999: 323). But above all, he was especially interested in preparing a project that would allow him to resume contact with French cinema, initially with *Cela s'appelle l'aurore* (That Is the Dawn, 1955).

United Artists was in charge of distributing *Robinson Crusoe*. In the United States the film was thus received as this company's creation and nearly all the reviews omitted Buñuel's leading contribution. New York's *Daily News*, for example, devoted two columns to praising the film and Dan O'Herlihy's performance along with a single dubious sentence about Buñuel: "The picture was filmed in Mexico and directed by a man with a reputation for daring."[13] Such comments may be explained by the collective paranoia resulting from the McCarthy witch hunts. It should not be surprising, for example, that Buñuel was considered a suspect author in a country that during the same year premiered Elia Kazan's *On The Waterfront*, a plea against betrayal, to huge critical and commercial success. The film received Oscars for best picture and best performer, among many other rewards. The European press, however, was much more attentive to Buñuel's role in making the film. The *Manchester Guardian*, for example, praised his ability to capture the essence of Defoe's story.[14] Tony Richardson and Lindsay Anderson also applauded the sensitivity of the whole movie, even regarding some of its sequences to be among the best of the documentary tradition (Sánchez Vidal, 1999: 178). Furthermore, the London newspaper *Sunday Observer* identified Buñuel as the author of titles including *Los olvidados* and recognized the value of his personal interpretation of Defoe's work, having chosen to emphasize the ruinous effects of loneliness on a human being.[15] In short, the European critics, especially the British, learned to appreciate the merit of Buñuel's particular work, being interested in the way he had proposed a "Hispanic" version of a British literary classic. Perhaps in this same context we should consider the comments of Emmanuel Roblès, a writer who wrote Buñuel a letter in October 1954, during the gestation of *Cela s'appelle l'aurore*, and praised the way he had "dégagé le héros solitaire de la gangue puritaine ou l'avait enfermé son auteur" (liberated the solitary hero from the puritanical bargain in which his author had enclosed him).[16] Buñuel actually paid more attention to Crusoe's moral miseries than to his material activities on the island. He felt especially intrigued by the character's unconscious, which Defoe did not address, because through it one could link Crusoe's story to more universal experiences such as love and desire (García Riera, 1973: 64).

Thinking in professional terms, the numerous screenplay changes Buñuel made throughout the creative process – an exceptional way of working for him – show the interest he ended up investing in the progress of this project. And to some extent he created a success, for *Robinson Crusoe* was one of Buñuel's most commercially lucrative films, and probably one of the best cinematic reinterpretations of the Defoe's original myth. However, professional contacts with blacklisted professionals and the British market failed to provide what he specifically wanted, which was the opportunity to expand his work into new areas. Instead, the French route, entailing a recollaboration with Emmanuel Roblès for *Cela s'appelle l'aurore*, would eventually allow Buñuel to relocate outside the Mexican film industry.

Notes

1 Luis Buñuel forcefully expressed all these considerations in the letters he wrote to his friend Ricardo Urgoiti, which have been published as an appendix in Cerdá and Fernández Colorado's book *Ricardo Urgoiti. Los trabajos y los días* (2008).

2 I would like to state my appreciation of Agustín Sánchez Vidal for his advice and directions concerning Luis Buñuel's interest in the plague. His ideas on this subject and many other aspects of Buñuel's life and work, as well as Robinson Crusoe, have significantly shaped this text.

3 This is the figure that Dan O'Herlihy gives as the film's budget in his notes on the film (University College Dublin Archives, School of History and Archives, "Dan O'Herlihy papers," P202).

4 Filmoteca Española (1952) "Carta de Michel Redgrave a Luis Buñuel," Archivo Buñuel/ 632.29.

5 The preparation of this chapter entailed the use of this document as well as information and data gathered from other personal and professional matters in Dan O'Herlihy's archive (letters, contracts, clippings, scripts, pictures, etc.); most specifically, University College of Dublin Archives, School of History and Archives, "Dan O'Herlihy papers," P202: 23, 110, 111, and 261.

6 Maybe it was Hugo Butler who put Luis Buñuel in contact with Dalton Trumbo, one of the many American film professionals who fled to Mexico precisely at this time in order to escape McCarthyism.

7 In this regard, see Fernando Gabriel Martín's rigorous study on the full report given by American censorship (Martín, 2010: 748). It should furthermore be noted that Luis Alcoriza also participated in writing the script, specifically the Spanish version, as shown in the film credits (Martín, 2010: 754). As a regular collaborator with Luis Buñuel since the late 1940s, it is likely that he helped him review the Spanish script, especially in all matters relating to the drafting of the dialogue, which was one of his tasks while working with Buñuel.

8 Henceforth, all references made to the film's shooting script are to the script Buñuel used while working on the set, constantly annotating, correcting, and adding all sorts of details to it. This script is currently deposited in Spanish Film (1952) "Robinson Crusoe / Luis Buñuel" Buñuel File 539. Henceforth I will refer to this document in the body text using the abbreviation (AB 539).

9 University College of Dublin Archives (2006) "Biographical History," Dan O'Herlihy papers, pp. I a XIV, School of History and Archives, p. V.
10 To delve into this issue as well as Buñuel's opinion of the film one should consult the letter he wrote to his friend José Rubia Barcia on October 7, 1952 (Rubia Barcia, 1992: 58, 59). According to Emilio García Riera, dubbing ended on October 15, 1952 (Garcia Riera, 1973: 63). Other sources speak of October 16, 1952 (Buñuel, 2002: 185).
11 The country's film media echoed this general surprise. Louella O. Parsons spoke of this nomination out of nowhere in an article entitled "Adventure Film for O'Herlihy" (March 1955). In several media O'Herlihy was referred to as the "dark horse" in the race for the Oscars, while other sources defended him as an actor whom Hollywood had ignored for several years and whom, thanks to the nomination, the whole world was now aware of (*PictureGoer*, Aug. 21, 1954).
12 When it was proposed in 1954 that he show one of his works at the Venice film festival, he chose *Robinson Crusoe* but later was obligated to present *El río y la muerte*, which ended up being a disaster.
13 In 1955, Dorothy Masters wrote an article for the *Daily News* entitled "'Crusoe' Gives Hour and Half Of Enjoyment," which is preserved as a loose clipping in the University College Dublin Archives, School of History and Archives, Dan O'Herlihy papers P202/111 (12).
14 This article is preserved as a loose clipping in the University College Dublin Archives, School of History and Archives, Dan O'Herlihy papers, P202/111 (3).
15 This article is preserved as a loose clipping in the University College Dublin Archives, School of History and Archives, Dan O'Herlihy papers, P202/111 (3).
16 Filmoteca Española (1954) "Carta Emmanuel Roblès a Luis Buñuel," Archivo Buñuel 691/7.

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14

The Cinematic Labor of Affect

Urbanity and Sentimental Education in *El bruto* and *Ensayo de un crimen*

Geoffrey Kantaris

> *If commodities could speak, they would say this: our use-value may interest men, but it does not belong to us as objects. What does belong to us as objects, however, is our value. Our own intercourse as commodities proves it. We relate to each other merely as exchange-values.*
>
> (Marx, 1994 [1867]: 243)

The films of Buñuel's Mexican cycle in the 1950s are set against the background of the rapid growth of Mexico's metropolis and the social effects of the shifting demographic of a city whose population had more than tripled from 1920 to 1950 and quadrupled from 1930 to 1960.[1] Yet while the auteurist films of the cycle, such as *Los olvidados* (The Forgotten Ones, aka The Young and the Damned, 1950) and *Ensayo de un crimen*, aka *La vida criminal de Archibaldo de la Cruz* (Rehearsal of a Crime, aka The Criminal Life of Archibaldo de la Cruz, 1955), respond in unique ways to what David Harvey (1985) terms "the urbanization of capital," even the more commercial genre films of the period – which Buñuel was wont to dismiss as "fodder" (*alimenticias*), such as *Susana*, aka *Carne y demonio* (Susana, aka The Devil and the Flesh, 1951), *La hija del engaño* (Daughter of Deceit, 1951), and *El bruto* (The Brute, 1953) – display an interest in translating the new modes of circulation of money and people into more immaterial flows of images, conducts, affects, and habits. Peter Evans has argued strongly that the division between the two bodies of work is artificial, and that the commercial films of the period rework "the auteurist thematics through the patterns and drives of the popular cinema" (1995: 38) despite Buñuel's lack of control over the final cut, the rhetorical requirements of commercial cinema, and the garish use of film music. Yet it is precisely these films' engagement with "the patterns and drives of popular cinema," from Mexican

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melodrama to Hollywood noir, which, I argue, provides us with an index of cinema's affective capture in the 1940s and 1950s and speaks to the "decoding" of women's sexuality and its mobilization within a new mode of libidinal economy. Hence, while Evans is interested in seeking out the traces of Buñuel's authorial mark in such films as *Susana* and *Una mujer sin amor* (A Woman without Love, 1952) – a procedure which produces illuminating and valuable readings – this chapter aims tentatively to invert this process.

This task must of course immediately be qualified. A proper working out of the traces left by popular forms in the 1950s films directed by Buñuel would no doubt require a book-length study. For it would not be sufficient to point to Mexican cinema's emergence from hybrid forms of storytelling and performances in fairs, the rise of cabaret, the *Teatro de Revistas* (Revue), and the circus, combined with the *Teatro de Carpas* (Tent Theatre), in which many of the artistes who pioneered Mexico's film industry cut their teeth and which fused in unique ways with generic models imported from Hollywood. It would also be necessary to develop a language to engage the circulation of affect in and through these emergent forms as they embedded themselves within the habits of daily life. Since it is not possible to undertake such a task here, this chapter intends instead to outline a theory of the dual process of affective flight and capture in Buñuel's films in order to try and understand the way in which they intervene in the circulation of new libidinal forces unleashed by the flows and counterflows of people, money, commodities, and images at the heart of the urbanization of capital and cultural modernization in Mexico City. To this end, two films will be examined, one conventionally considered to be of a commercial nature, *El bruto*, and the other generally recognized as an auteurist creation, *Ensayo de un crimen*, although I am less interested in the differences of procedure in these films than in their commonalities from the point of view of their encoding of the *Fort-Da* movement of affect in the disruptive redistribution of sense and sensibility wrought by Mexico's popular film industry in its Golden Age.

Learning Urbanity

It has often been suggested that Mexican film of the 1940s and 1950s had a pedagogical role as a tool for the formation of a "citizenry" in the dual sense of imparting urbanity (the know-how for finding one's place, socially and imaginatively, in the metropolis) and for producing a social imaginary of post-Revolutionary citizenship. In an early, much-cited text on Mexican cinema, Carlos Monsiváis used the expression: "No se accedió al cine a soñar: se fue a aprender" [People did not go to the cinema to dream: they went to learn] (cited in Martín-Barbero, 1989: 180). What is often left out of the quotation, however, is that what people went to the cinema to learn about, Monsiváis suggests, were "hábitos" and

"códigos de costumbres" (habits and codes of conduct), many of them caught up in narratives of capitalist modernization, rather than some prefabricated model of Mexican national identity. Nevertheless, in his later work, Monsiváis explicitly figures film in terms of a psychic mirror for collective identity formation via family romance:

> Cada película es, en el sentido psíquico, un espejo a lo largo de la sala. A este "ser como los que contemplan," mucho le deben actores de reparto, primeras figuras, escenógrafos, directores y camarógrafos. Ellos, al urdir un país también llamado México, lo hacen finalmente de acuerdo con quienes, en butaca o en sillas, reelaboran los sucedidos de la pantalla y los trasforman en mitologías y cultura familiar, en depósito vivencial de las generaciones. … El público se deja "adoptar" casi literalmente por el cine, y comparte sus filias y fobias: las ganas de conmoverse para sentirse vivos. (Monsiváis and Bonfil, 1994: 65)[2]

Such specular imagery, together with that of family-predicated identity metaphors, abounds, unsurprisingly, in the narratives of identity formation that have been told with regard to Mexican film (see, for example, *Mexican Cinema: Reflections of a Society* [Mora, 1989], as well as the book in question here, *A través del espejo* [Through the Mirror]). Generally the mirror imagery is used "naively" to suggest a mimetic or reflective relationship between genre film and the popular classes who incorporated filmgoing into their weekly ritual during the 1930s–1950s. Occasionally (and this is implicitly Monsiváis's approach) it is used in a more complex, quasi-Lacanian/Althusserian mode of identity formation and construction by which film is seen to interpellate its audience, suturing them into a narrative of citizenship (as much imagined, fantasized, and "felt" as actually appearing on screen) that conjoins family romance (as the basis of melodrama) to national identity construction.[3]

While it is undoubtedly the case that the governments of Manuel Ávila Camacho and Miguel Alemán Valdés saw film as an instrument for constructing hegemony during the rapid modernization of the peasantry and formation of an industrial proletariat, and by the late 1940s had established significant state investment in the industry by means of credit and direct state funding of alternative distribution channels, there are nevertheless a couple of problems with the quasi-Althusserian approach to interpellation of the citizenry via cinema. The first is that the interpellative model implicitly subsumes at least part of cinema's function into an ideological apparatus of the state, a quasi-disciplinary institution on a par with schools, the police, and belletristic pedagogy, while generally ignoring an "affective excess" in popular film which is distinctly *indisciplinary*, which decomposes pseudo-Oedipal state–family structures (and to which Buñuel addresses a large part of his work). The second is a general critique of interpellation which, in the words of Judith Butler, "presupposes not only that the inculcation of conscience already has taken place, but that conscience, understood as the psychic operation of a

regulatory norm, constitutes a specifically psychic and social working of power on which interpellation depends but for which it can give no account" (Butler, 1997: 5). It is perhaps unsurprising that the films of Buñuel should generally escape such instrumentalization, given Surrealism's allergy toward identitarian frameworks, whether at the personal or national level ("la patrie" was, after all, one of the quasi-theological roots of evil for the Surrealists)[4]; it is perhaps more surprising that it is at the very level of *popular* discourse that Buñuel's films are able to mobilize affect precisely as a mode of excess and extasis, of the radical decoding of flows.

Jesús Martín-Barbero, while affirming interpellation as the basic articulating mechanism by which cinema "mediates" the aspirations and political interests of the working classes and the national-hegemonic strategies of the ruling elites of the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s, nevertheless sees the process as fundamentally driven in this period by the popular demand for recognition arising from the social movements which impel a crisis of hegemony:

> La peculiaridad del modo como las masas latinoamericanas se hacen presentes en la escena social tiene que ver en últimas con la *doble interpelación* que las moviliza desde el momento de la explosión urbana: una interpelación de clase que sólo es percibida por una minoría y una interpelación popular-nacional que alcanza a las mayorías. … [E]l papel decisivo que los medios masivos juegan en ese período residió en su capacidad de hacerse voceros de la interpelación que desde el populismo convertía a las masas en pueblo y al pueblo en Nación. Interpelación que venia del Estado pero que sólo fue eficaz en la medida en que las masas reconocieron en ella algunas de sus demandas más básicas y la presencia de sus modos de expresión. (1989: 176–179)[5]

For the later Monsiváis, also, the work of identity construction is no longer a simple process of "learning" (even if it is the learning of *gestus* and *habitus*), but is actually highly equivocal, involving a dual process of "mystification" and "destruction": on the one hand a primary investiture similar to commodity fetishism, and on the other the dissolution of traditions, religious frameworks, and community ties in a process which he calls "secularization." Here Monsiváis does not merely reproduce a narrative of becoming or interpellation through filmic imaginaries of the post-Revolutionary subject, but also points toward cinema's effective and affective disarticulation of older social hierarchies, be they of family, religion, or gender. For what is much more interesting than the bland narrative of culture in the service of specular identity-expression (or construction) – a nationalist identity paradigm within which much of the literature on Mexican visual culture remains caught (see for example Mraz, 2009) – is the extent to which Mexican cinema of the Golden Age *disarticulated* identities, disembedded peasant culture from its "organic" rootedness in the rhythms of the countryside and agricultural production, and conjoined it both to increasing urbanization (with its attendant industrialization) and to the forms and formats of an incipient transnational visual imaginary dominated largely (but not exclusively) by Hollywood.

Cinema and the Capture of Affect

The concept of affect (*affectus*, as distinct from *affectio*, i.e., affection) derives ultimately from the philosophy of Baruch Spinoza, although its contemporary revival is usually credited to Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987 [1980]), and subsequently to the influential work of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2000). Within these accounts, capitalism is seen to have colonized the "immaterial," virtual worlds of the mass media (from cinema to, latterly, cyberspace) as the latest manifestation of the quest for a "spatial fix" to its internal contradictions (Harvey, 2001: 284–311). The production of hegemony has always been intimately bound up with the capture of affect, of course, channeling the flow of social affect into fictive national sentiments of "deep, horizontal comradeship" (Anderson, 1983: 7) toward members of the nation, and fear and mistrust toward non-members. But capitalism puts affect into circulation in more complex ways, which partly accounts for its power to transcend localities and reinscribe them in larger spatial frameworks, as well as for its appeal to libido in order to mobilize the desire for consumption. Putting such forces into play, first of all in the urbanization of capital (as in Mexico City of the 1950s), and in the incipient transnationalization of capital of which (Hollywood) cinema is the pioneer, has radical consequences which are corrosive of the very structures through which the national-popular had attempted to capture and fix affective flows in the first place. For Hardt, in the later postmodern period, labor becomes increasingly both "immaterial" and "affective," as capital seeks to manage on a global scale, through the co-option of the mass media, the sphere of consumption dominated by image, style, and the unpredictable libidinal attachments of consumers (Hardt, 1999: 94–96). I would argue that cinema in the 1950s, as a transnational capitalist industry engaged in the production of commodified virtual worlds, was already deeply caught up in these processes.

The idea of an economy of affect is not a particularly new one, not only because it stretches back to Spinoza (1994 [1677]: 154), for whom affect was a modification of a body's relation to infinite "substance," increasing or decreasing its power of activity, but also because it mostly gives us, in its Deleuzian guise, a new vocabulary for something which has been theorized under many different names. In fact one of the reasons for Slavoj Žižek's differences with Deleuze in, for example, *Organs without Bodies* (2004), is that psychoanalysis has its own complex vocabulary for the social capture of affect and for what can go wrong with such processes. Deleuze and Guattari's reframing of Freudian psychoanalysis via Karl Marx's understanding of the deterritorializations induced by capital (in *Anti-Oedipus*, 1990 [1972]) is, in this vocabulary, a critique of psychoanalysis' attempted capture of affect in order to recontain the dissolvent flows which capitalist modernization unwittingly unleashes (as we shall see).[6] In many ways this critique continues and updates the appropriation and displacement of psychoanalysis begun by the

Surrealists in the 1920s, which is precisely why Buñuel's work, produced at the heart of a popular industry in Mexico whose most fundamental characteristic might be its status as a capitalist technology for the commodification of affect, provides a potent filmic frame for the staging of these contradictory flows.

Taming the Brute

El bruto and *Ensayo de un crimen* (together with *Él* [This Strange Passion, 1953]) have been seen as belonging to Buñuel's "macho-dramas" which "emphasiz[e] the correlations between … troubled men and the image of a state in crisis" (Acevedo-Muñoz, 2003: 124), a correlation which tends to be thought of in allegorical terms. Thus both films' male protagonists, Pedro "the Brute" and Archibaldo the aristocratic dandy, are made to stand for the crisis in the social role of machismo as providing the ideological glue or pact between the state and the citizenry, particularly the peasantry and the newly industrialized working classes (an argument expounded for a later period by Ramírez Berg [1992: 107]). In the case of *El bruto*, Acevedo-Muñoz argues, Buñuel uses and ironically frames the star status of the lead actor Pedro Armendáriz, who had personified the ideology of machismo in the films of Emilo Fernández, in order to suggest the untenability of this stereotype in the midst of the rapid but ramshackle modernization of Mexico. Buñuel casts Armendáriz distinctly "against type" (Acevedo-Muñoz, 2003: 126) in the suggestible, gullible, manipulated, and dim-witted figure of El Bruto, a slaughterhouse worker who becomes a henchman for an ageing capitalist, Don Andrés, but ends up as a pawn in the hands of Don Andrés' young wife Paloma, a femme fatale played by Katy Jurado. In the case of *Ensayo de un crimen*, Buñuel casts "Ernesto Alonso, a soap opera star who never married" (2003: 139) in the role of a debonair bachelor whose "latent homosexuality" (2003: 138) supposedly surfaces in his (unrealized) desires to murder women.

While suggestive and certainly in the line of Buñuel's questioning of the identitarian rhetoric of Mexican (filmic) nationalism, this reading misses what is a crucial focus in both films. If machismo is in crisis in the 1950s, it is not allegorical of some imminent national crisis, for these are in fact the years of the so-called "Mexican miracle," which did not come to an end until the oil shocks of the 1970s, and indeed machismo remained an available discourse, whether as compensation for subaltern injury, or by dint of *droit de seigneur* amongst the propertied classes, or indeed as a state-sponsored power pact under the PRI's (Partido Revolucionario Institucional) vertical structures of patronage-as-patriarchy, well into the 1990s. Something else was set in circulation, and recorded in these films, which was much more corrosive than the iconoclastic deployment of a stereotyped "homosexuality" by Buñuel against the image of strong macho identity (a reading which might work for *Él* but which seems particularly forced in the case of *Ensayo de un crimen*,

where the protagonist is clearly attracted to women sexually even as he fantasizes about eliminating female sexuality by eliminating the women themselves; although for a much more nuanced account of gender ambiguity and the construction of a queer subject position in *Ensayo de un crimen*, see Gutiérrez-Albilla, 2008: 117–146). The unprecedented urban construction boom which Buñuel recorded in *Los olvidados*, and which is the cause of the immediate social conflict in *El bruto* (Don Andrés wants to demolish the housing where his tenants live in order to sell the plot for redevelopment), points us toward a more profound set of processes which were fundamentally reorganizing social and family relationships, and with them the conventional mappings of social power and libidinal investments. And while it is true that Buñuel self-reflexively uses the popular star system and popular generic formulae in *El bruto*, what is being framed is not so much the figure of the macho, as the role played by popular cinema itself, particularly the urban genre of the *cine de arrabal* (slum melodrama) – as the key interface between the urban populace and technological modernity – in this remapping of the libidinal economy of Mexican society. This is why the real interest of both films lies not in the emasculation of their protagonists, but in the changing sexuality of *women* as an index of their pushing at the boundaries of their affective capture within the institution of the patriarchal family. This decoding of the flows – of affect and libido together with money – has everything to do with the deterritorializations induced by urbanization, by national and international capital flows, and their imaginary entanglement in the indisciplined vision machine of popular cinema. This also helps to explain why the *cine de arrabal* (the popular genre of the slum melodrama which *El bruto* both engages and parodies) came under increasing attack from reactionary social forces such as the Catholic *Liga de la Decencia* (Legion of Decency) from 1953 onwards (González Rodríguez, 1993: 42–43).

Space, Family, and Genre

El bruto begins with the staging of a typical urban land struggle between the ageing property magnate Andrés Cabrera, supported by the forces of law and order, and the rebellious occupants of a tenement he owns in the Portales district of Mexico City and which he wishes to demolish so that he can sell the land for urban redevelopment: he has been offered $250,000 pesos for the plot of land. The (then) working-class Colonia Portales in Benito Suárez was an area of major real-estate speculation and development in the 1950s, with the old ramshackle houses being torn down and replaced with apartment blocks at a feverish rate, so that by 1960 the population of the area had expanded hugely and had become largely middle class (Gobierno Delegacional Benito Suárez, *c.*2010). This climate of land speculation and the break-up of semi-communal living conditions makes of the film, amongst other things, a *spatial* expression of class conflict which is mapped out in

terms of the power of money to dissolve communities while unleashing new forms of libidinal economy. In the *Grundrisse*, Marx makes the startling statement that while "in money the community is … a real abstraction," nevertheless the expression of both wage labor and capital in terms of exchange value means that "money thereby directly and simultaneously becomes the *real community* [*Gemeinwesen*]" (Marx, 1993 [1858]: 225–226). By opening the film with this scene of social struggle between the abstract representation of space as exchange value and the lived spaces of the community,[7] Buñuel and Alcoriza are directly staging the power of money to dissolve community and *become the real community*, that is, substitute itself for community as an abstract expression of the relations between people, including the very nucleus of social reproduction: the family.

Indeed, the film's first short sequence, just before the staging of this socio-spatial conflict, focuses on the relationship between one of the leaders of the tenement community, Don Carmelo, and his teenage daughter Meche, in which already the expected family roles are curiously inverted. Meche is counting out some drops of medicine for her father, telling him to wrap up carefully, giving him his packed lunch, and offering advice on avoiding the rush hour on his bus journey to work at a factory, every bit as if she were a mother sending her child off to school. We assume that Meche's mother has died, leading to an inversion of the father–daughter relationship. The sequence is significant because it sets up a whole series of inverted family relationships in the film. Don Andrés' "wife," Paloma, who had been "saved" by Don Andrés from a mire of debt in which her husband had left her, is young enough to be his daughter and they live with his doddery father whom they treat as if he were an irresponsible child, buying him sweets to reward him and withholding them from him when he is "naughty." El Bruto lives with a woman who has brought her whole family into their two-room living space, including her bedridden but apparently perfectly able-bodied mother and her crippled beggar-uncle, all of them dependent on El Bruto's wages as a slaughterhouse worker. El Bruto is both protected and exploited by his "boss" Don Andrés as his (illegitimate) son without overt recognition of the fact, yet, after Don Andrés instructs him to abandon his dependent family in order to service the former's money interests, El Bruto ends up sleeping with Paloma, his putative stepmother, then making "home" in a hovel on a construction site with the teenage Meche, as a substitute for her father whom he had unintentionally killed, and finally murdering his own father (Don Andrés) in some pre-political realization of the Oedipal drama.

Through this freak show of partial or pathologically Oedipalized family structures, shorn of all but the most cursory nod toward romance – there is not a single "normal" family represented in the film and all of the romantic attachments are provisional, unstable, and temporary – Buñuel mercilessly subverts the travails of family romance encoded in popular urban melodramas such as those directed by Roberto Gavaldón and Julio Bracho. Monsiváis notes that Dolores del Río in Gavaldón's archetypal melodramas (*La otra* [The Other One, 1946]; *La casa chica*

[The Love Nest, 1950]; *Deseada* [1951]) is always condemned to psychological submission, her own desire erased ("carece de voluntad"; Monsiváis and Bonfil, 1994: 182), while for Ana M. López, even the films starring María Félix, whom Monsiváis sees as a more complex transitional figure, reproduce the desire for the stability of the patriarchal family:

> Easily classified as antifamily melodramas insofar as they reject the surface accoutrements of the patriarchal family, ultimately her films forcefully reinscribe the need for the standard family. Despite titles focusing on the female character, Félix's films are male-centered narratives, where the specular pleasure lies with the woman (and her masquerades of masculinity), but the narrative remains with a male protagonist. (1993: 155–156)

Somewhat different, however, is the relationship of *El bruto* to the thoroughly urban *arrabal* films and the related *cabaretera*/prostitute genre. These are fundamentally hybrid films, combining the genres of melodrama, musicals, crime and gangster movies, neorealism, and film noir (particularly the "bad girl" movie). Here Buñuel taps into the neorealist mode he had used so effectively in *Los olvidados*, in the representation of the daily struggle for food, work, and decent living conditions of the working-class *arrabal* inhabitants, and, bizarrely at first, fuses it with the "dangerous seductress" image already associated with actress Katy Jurado (e.g., as Kitty in Alejandro Galindo's *Hay lugar para ... dos* [Room for Two, 1949] or, prototypically, as the fallen woman "who gets up late" in Ismael Rodríguez' *Nosotros los pobres* [We the Poor, 1948]). Buñuel does not engage this hotchpotch in the deliciously chaotic way in which it emerges in *Nosotros los pobres*, which Monsiváis describes as having a plot that is impossible to relay adequately because its unfolding "equivale al fluir de la vida misma" (is no more or less than the flow of life itself) (1994: 144–148). Instead, he does so by forcing a productive confrontation and redeployment of the axiomatic[8] which governs the *arrabal* film's compulsive cannibalization of the genres of prurient national melodrama, stylized and voyeuristic "neorealism" (actually closer to the Hispanic picaresque comedy than the Italian model), and contemporary Hollywood crime/noir formats. These genres are already decoded by the *arrabal* films, which is to say they are turned by the machine of cinema itself into deterritorializing flows of desire and affect exchangeable for the price of a cinema ticket. Buñuel, however, turns his camera on the axiomatic system itself which decodes the (transnational/urban) flow of these bastardized generic formats, which we could initially characterize in terms of such "immanent" axioms as "desire is the plaything of death," "power creates its own resistance," and "space is an effect of flows." These are axioms insofar as they are algorithms regulating the production of modern subjectivity via the capture of affect liberated from the social codes governing traditional societies. In the case of Mexico, the flows captured by the cinema of the 1940s and 1950s are "liberated" from the partial decoding of the traditional Catholic sublimation of sexuality and

death, the Revolutionary origins of the modern capitalist state as the dismantling of despotism and the institution of a modern biopolitical order, and the uprooting of hundreds of thousands of post-Revolutionary peasants converging on the burgeoning cities. The said algorithms are embodied, in *El bruto*, in the Oedipal machinery of cinematic melodrama (framed self-consciously at several points and inverted by Buñuel), the disciplinary state apparatuses (present at the beginning and end of the film in the form of the police as the ultimate arbiters of "brute" life), and the channeling of urban workers' aspirations into a regime of rent (which in turn requires and produces waged labor to service it).

More broadly, the Freudian axiom of *eros/thanatos*, so compelling for the Surrealists, needs to be understood as a machine in the radical sense that, for Jacques Lacan, the drive is an impersonal, "undead" machine (Žižek, 1997: 89) which pursues its own ends beyond any conscious control exercised by the (illusion of) ego. For its part, the Foucauldian axiom of power/resistance is the machine regulating (and limiting) the production of hegemony and biopolitical administration in the modern (post-Revolutionary) state, while the Lefebvrian axiom of the "production of space," precipitated from flows of capital and labor, is the inexorable machine which produces the (material) city as an expression of investment flows powered by the twin faces of production and consumption. Yet such "immanent" axioms can also all be subsumed into the larger axiomatic machinery of capitalist exchange, of the "encounter of two sorts of flows":

> the decoded flows of production in the form of money-capital, and the decoded flows of labor in the form of the "free worker." Hence, unlike previous social machines, the capitalist machine is incapable of providing a code that will apply to the whole of the social field. By substituting money for the very notion of a code, it has created an axiomatic of abstract quantities that keeps moving further and further in the direction of the deterritorialization of the socius. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1990 [1972]: 33)

It is important to stress that Mexican film of this period does not "express" this axiomatic in some naive representational sense: rather, it *is* the axiomatic in a very real sense, for it subjects all of the "customs" and habits, which the new urban migrants went to the cinema to "learn" according to Monsiváis, to the logic of the *spectacle as commodity*, and hence to the axiom of quantitative equivalence and exchange. Cinema is the very face of technological modernity for the working classes of the Golden Age, a desiring, deterritorializing machine which operates through and on the commodification of bodies and passions, connecting the flows of urban migrants to the transnational flows of images, fashions, and wants. It is in this sense that cinema can be understood as a labor of affect which mediates love, hatred, hope, fear, compassion, greed, rage, and so on: on the one hand commodifying these affects for sale, and on the other slowly but surely precipitating an avalanche of new wants, customs, and habits, forming a culture of consumption

based around image, spectacle, and fashion. What Buñuel does in both *El bruto* and *Ensayo de un crimen*, in different ways, is to train his camera on the very mode of functioning of this axiomatic field, revealing the release and capture of feminine sexuality and desire as a feedback loop at the heart of the cinematic labor of affect.

In *El bruto*, it is through the figure of Paloma that Buñuel frames the flight and capture of affect, its interpersonal, excessive, unbounded nature, but also its brute drive, its intimate relation to power, its pushing at the schizophrenic limits of deterritorialized desire. But before engaging the film's entanglement with these flows, we shall turn to *Ensayo de un crimen* in order to examine Buñuel's staging of the blind repetition-compulsion of the axiomatic machine.

Of Crime, Musical Boxes, and Film Reels

Ensayo de un crimen opens with a flashback to the protagonist's childhood during the Mexican Revolution, with Archibaldo narrating in voice-over the evening on which his young governess was killed, inside the family home, by a stray bullet from a revolutionary skirmish on the streets below. The sequence is initially framed by a close-up shot of the pages of a book being turned, showing photographs of people and events during the Revolution, while the adult Archibaldo (we realize later) sets the historical scene, recounting it in the first person. This is followed by a take of the exterior of Archi's family home, which dissolves into the image of a toy train circling round and round on its tracks, all by itself, in a room inside the house. This is the first of a series of images of rotary machines introduced in the film, and is given added emphasis by the fact that the governess, who cannot find Archi, is annoyed by the sound of the train incessantly circling and unplugs the power cord from the wall socket. She then finds Archi hiding in a wardrobe wearing his mother's corset and high-heeled shoes. The second rotary image comes in the same sequence, when Archi's mother, who has announced that she is going out for the evening with Archi's father (to Archi's great consternation), offers him her musical box to play with in order to distract him. Archi immediately winds the spring to make the large ballerina go round. The camera frames the circular, mechanical motion in close-up for a few seconds while the box's jingle, which becomes an insistent and eerily mechanistic theme tune in the film, is amplified in the foreground. Archi's mother, meanwhile, has signaled to the governess to collude with the distraction by inventing a story about the box having belonged to a king. This immediately positions us as spectators in a third layer of embedded fiction (the first being the adult Archibaldo's voice-over/storytelling, the second being the flashback, and the third the embedded fairy tale). The governess changes the story and tells Archi that it belonged first to a genie with malevolent powers, and only later to the king who had used the powers bestowed on the box by the genie to kill the queen (falsely accused of being in collusion with the king's enemies).



Figure 14.1 The machinic unconscious: Archibaldo (Ernesto Alonso) contemplates his musical box in *Ensayo de un crimen*. Alianza Cinematográfica Española.

In changing the fairy tale, a genre implicated in the transmission of a patriarchal class/gender order to children based on family romance, the governess effectively substitutes the "ghost in the machine" for the affective mechanisms of the Oedipal drama. However, the story is fatefully interrupted by its antithesis: the insurrectional violence of the Revolution. Hearing gunshots in the street, the governess rushes to the window to see what is going on. At this point, Archi decides to try out the musical box's occult powers, and winding it up again, sets it in motion (Figure 14.1).

Most psychoanalytically inflected accounts of the film interpret the fact that the little Archi had been cross-dressing in a wardrobe as a hint at his pre-Oedipal fixation on the mother and his later adult use of fetish objects (including women turned into objects) to disavow and re-enact the trauma of castration (the father's "stealing" of the mother from the child on that fateful evening). The Oedipal triangle is indeed repeated structurally with each of the women he is attracted to in adult life: Carlota who is shot by her jealous lover on the day of her wedding to Archi, and Lavinia and Patricia, both of whom spurn him for older "paternal" men. However, this is better read as a setup for a Freudian Oedipal-fetish "performance" in the film, along with the rather comic vision of the young Archi staring wide-eyed in disbelief and astonishment at the governess' bleeding neck and gaping at her stockinged legs, "rehearsed" (*ensayado*) and "repeated" in the clothes fetishism surrounding Lavina and Carlota, and in the latter's parallel shooting. Readings that take these structures as an *explanatory* psychological framework appear to overlook the comedic dimension of the film. The sequence is rendered

comic by the manner of its retelling and by its status as (literally) a dress-rehearsal. It can also be seen as a mischievous framing, parodic of "the worst tradition of Hollywood Freudian surrealism" as André Bazin (1951) put it apropos the Freudian sequence in *Los olvidados*, or at least as a wink to the Freudianism of the psychological drama/horror genre established by Alfred Hitchcock in the 1940s with films such as *Shadow of a Doubt* (1943), *Spellbound* (1945, on which Salvador Dalí was hired to design the dream sequences), and *Strangers on a Train* (1951).

The Spanish title of the film of course means both "Attempted Murder" and "Rehearsal of a Murder,"[9] and it is rehearsal in a peculiar sense, for as an adult in 1950s Mexico City, 30 years or so later, Archi finds himself irresistibly attracted to "libidinous" women, yet is also irresistibly compelled by the fantasy of murdering them, a fantasy which he repeats over and over again. Moreover, at each stage in his murder plans he compulsively rehearses the crimes in his mind, a rehearsal which is twice translated *filmically* as a preview, or trailer, but which is then only performed by proxy since Archi never directly commits any of the crimes he has planned except, arguably, the burning of Lavinia's mannequin in his potter's kiln (one of her jobs is as a model for a firm making tailors' dummies). But it is also a rehearsal in that the main body of the film is for the most part replayed or recounted analeptically as a visualization of Archi's declaration to the examining magistrate – in what amounts to his life story – when he turns himself in, declaring himself guilty of the murder of four women after the "accidental" death of a nun who was looking after him in a sanatorium following the shooting of Carlota. Finally, the film is a rehearsal in that the confession scene in front of a judge or magistrate is a quintessentially filmic device in the 1940s–1950s crime/noir genre, one by which film is able to conjoin its own theatricality as a medium with the theatricality of the legal system in order to ground the cinematic illusion in the judicial production of truth-effects (and the better to reaffirm the patriarchal order after the disturbances wrought by the femme fatale).

Gutiérrez-Albilla astutely links the confession before the judge (and hence the entire analeptic structure of the film) to "those confessional practices that Foucault mentions, such as the Catholic faithful confessing their sins to the father or the patient lying on the couch speaking to the analyst in the psychoanalytic encounter" (2008: 126). Having posited the film's "framing" of such practices, he goes on to ask: "can we challenge normative psychoanalytic attempts to integrate the ego in a teleologically narrativized sexuality by focusing on Archibaldo's acting out of his performative elaboration of the symptom rather than on the curative element of the psychoanalytic technique?" (2008: 126, emphasis added). Indeed, I would argue that the yoking together, under the sign of repetition-anxiety and compulsive rehearsal, of "discipline," "punishment," and "desire" in the confessional/psychoanalytical structure of the film, phantasmatically linked, moreover, to the social upheaval of the Mexican Revolution as an "interruption" of the Oedipal/disciplinary gender-programming of the fairy tale, is highly suggestive of the loosening of such social structures in the rapidly urbanizing context of 1950s Mexico

City. The Oedipal replay in this film has to be understood as precisely that: a replay or rehearsal *of Oedipus* that has become automatic, an axiomatic, or abstract machine for the creation of equivalences and cloned subjectivities.

This may well be the meaning of the only elements of the aforementioned opening sequence which do not belong to the Oedipal psycho-drama, yet which are given such peculiar emphasis from the outset: the rotating, autonomous toy train and the rotating ballerina with its mindless jingle which proliferates throughout the film (and sticks insistently in the ears of the audience). Evans observantly points to the parallel drawn between these two images of mechanical circular movements (1995: 102), and earlier notes that, "[l]ike Bergson's mechanical man, Archibaldo is an automaton programmed by Oedipal decree into routine behavioural patterns" (1995: 99), but he does not link up these insights. Sidney Donnell, recounting Archi's first encounter with Patricia outside the house of Carlota, hints at the idea, without developing it, that the true "nightmare" of the film may lie not so much in the disavowed trauma of castration/death leading to incompletely Oedipalized adult sexuality, fetishism, and repetition-compulsion, but in the mechanical, undead nature of the drive: "Patricia … flirts with him, then taunts him shamelessly, showing off her legs as she enters her boyfriend's Cadillac. Archi walks towards the entrance of the home, but he transforms into a sort of zombie as the warped tune from the music box plays in the background, having graduated into a nightmarish form of carrousel music" (2000: 83).

Ultimately, the images of rotating, autonomous or semi-autonomous mechanisms in this film – from the train and the musical box to the spinning roulette in the illegal casino where Archi goes to meet the flamboyant Patricia, and the potter's wheel in Archi's studio where he makes his cloned vases and burns the clone of Lavinia – refer us to the final mechanical loop in this series of rotating, compulsively repeating machines: the cinematic reel itself. This is why all the citational discourses in the film – from Oedipal *Urszene* to the melodrama of lovers' revenge (Carlota's story), from the urban crime/detective genre (the murder of Patricia) to the confessional/psychoanalytical scene in the judge's office – are ultimately coded as rehearsal, cinematic replay, as mechanical reproduction.

During the urbanization of capital at the beginning of Mexico City's transformation from metropolis to megalopolis, Buñuel allegorizes the disruptions wrought by the circulation of capital transmogrified into excessive desire and abjection, into the compulsively repeated enactments of affective flight followed by affective capture followed by affective flight in the *Fort-Da* structure of the film. Yet as previously stated, cinema in 1950s Mexico City *is* the axiomatic logic of exchange. Buñuel is intensely aware of the complicity of film, at the height of its popularity as a mass medium in Mexico, with this enactment of the deterritorialization of (feminine) desire followed by its powerful reterritorialization, self-reflexively encoded in the film through flashback and the to-and-fro movement between fascination with libidinal excess and the desire for retribution against the femme fatale. The historical upset of hegemony in the Mexican Revolution

gets mapped filmically onto the social instabilities generated by an incipient libidinal revolution which is emerging as capital expands its frontiers, by way of new encodings of affect, through the mobilization of women's sexuality in the service of intensified modes of commodity fetishism. Patricia's addiction to gambling away her rich lover's money, flaunting the cost of her expensive designer shoes, and trashing motor cars on a whim, speaks to this new circulation of affect as excess, as a radical decoding of women as property, which puts them into circulation together with the flow of commodities as exchange-value. Lavinia too is caught up in this *machine*, this cinema-musical-box which decodes feminine desire through the intercourse of commodities. She circulates in the city literally as a commodity in the form of the mannequins or tailor's dummies for which she models, and her work as a tour guide for groups of visiting *gringos* (Yanks) points to the commodification of national space within the incipient globalization of capital.

And finally, at the end of Archi's flashback narration, just after he has recounted the melodramatic murder of Carlota by her former lover minutes after she married Archi, we re-emerge in the judge's office to realize that the whole story, far from invoking the (Foucauldian) apparatus of discipline and punish, is treated by the judge as an entertaining story: "Perdóneme una pregunta señor de la Cruz: ¿Le gustan a usted las novelas por entrega?" ("One question, Mr de la Cruz. Do you like mystery stories?"). Archibaldo shows great consternation, insisting that he is a criminal, as if more worthy of the transcendental machinations of *Crime and Punishment* than pulp fiction. But the judge is having none of it, and gives him one last piece of advice, referring to Archi's wielding of a razor blade in his murder fantasies: "¡Rasúrese usted con máquina, señor de la Cruz! Eso es todo" ("In the future, use an electric shaver. That's about all"). And there we have it: the blade of Jack the Ripper, the blade which cuts the eye at the beginning of *Un chien andalou*, is rendered obsolete in one fell swoop, transformed into the rotary machine of a new-fangled commodity: the electric razor.

Unheard-of Becomings

By way of conclusion, we may now return to the decoding of feminine desire in *El bruto*, which it is possible to perceive now as a much more radical statement than has hitherto been suggested of the disruption of libidinal economy wrought by the conjunction of urban modernization, commodification, and what Jonathan Beller calls "the cinematic mode of production" (2002). For it is perhaps nowhere more true than in Mexico of the 1950s, at least in Latin America, that cinema allies itself so intimately with capitalist modernization and the urbanization of capital in a society that had been hitherto predominantly rural (and became predominantly urban by 1960). Beller, in a global context, argues for the central role of cinema

(and subsequent televisual media) in the *production* of the imaginary and the consequent "de-ontologization" of the unconscious: "Metz argues that 'cinema is a technique of the imaginary' … However, the scope of today's (counter)revolution … emerges from a reversal of these very terms: the imaginary is a technique of cinema, or rather, of mediation generally. Such a reversal de-ontologizes the unconscious and further suggests that the unconscious is cinema's product" (2002: 64). While this claim may seem audacious applied on a global scale, it describes perfectly the tendency outlined in this chapter for 1950s Mexico. For in Buñuel's films, too – films which both describe and partake of this process – the unconscious is no longer a matter of ontology, immanent to being and (Oedipal) "identity" construction, but has become "desiring-production," a machinic product of the (desiring) cinema-machine.

El bruto allegorizes perfectly this de-Oedipalization of (feminine) desire in the sequence where Pedro (El Bruto) and Paloma, Don Andrés' "wife," have their first major erotic encounter. The sequence begins with Pedro passing by his room on the ground floor of the house and noticing that his door is ajar. He approaches the door crack to peep through, and a point-of-view shot frames Paloma sitting on his bed sewing one of his shirts. The situation connotes domesticity and motherhood (Pedro alludes to this saying later that "not even his mother" had treated him so kindly), and the voyeuristic, tight framing though the crack suggests both the circumscription of femininity within these roles and this *framing/capture* itself as the mode of masculine scopophilic desire. Paloma has arranged the room to make it more homely, put sheets on his bed and arranged and mended his clothes, yet she also scolds Pedro for his slovenly appearance, and for leaving his shirt partially unbuttoned to show off his chest. Pedro hands her a missing button from his shirt and she starts to sew it back on, calling into question his virility: "tan grandulón y tan niño de pecho … Ni pareces hombre de veras. Cuando te regaña Andrés, te sumes y buscas una falda donde esconderte. ¡Me da una risa!"[10] She thus neutralizes Pedro's "brutish" masculinity by regressing him in a fantasy family structure with him as the child running to hide behind his mother's skirts. Pedro explains that his mother was in fact a maid in the family home, and Don Andrés acted like a father for him, buying him sweets when he was good and scolding him when he was naughty (immediately referencing the current inverted family structure whereby Don Andrés now does the same to his own father). While Pedro is talking, Paloma regularly lifts her gaze from the sewing to glance at Pedro's chest. As she finishes the sewing, and as Pedro is speculating as to whether Don Andrés is really his father or not, she lifts her head, staring hungrily at him. She then lowers her mouth to bite the remaining thread off, opens his shirt wider, and then suddenly bites at his chest with abandon. At this El Bruto grabs her and tries to overpower her sexually. Struggling and threatening to call Andrés, she frees herself and when he protests that he thought she liked him, she snarls: "Pues sí. Pero para eso que tú me quieres, hace falta una cosa. ¡Que quiera yo!"[11]

The sequence thus allegorizes a shift from women's domestication and passivity to the assertion of active female desire, recoding the woman's gaze and refusing female passivity/objectification as the basis of sexual desire. As mentioned earlier, this is a direct challenge to the representation of feminine sexuality in the melodramatic roles played by the likes of Dolores del Río, but, more importantly, this is a desire that is no longer wholly constructed within Oedipal family romance. For although Pedro ends up sleeping with his "stepmother" Paloma and, later, killing his father, Paloma's desire is precisely *that which exceeds her Oedipal capture*, as suggested here by her active Oedipal regression of the Brute/macho figure Pedro (Armendáriz) and her subversion of the (Mexican) psycho-drama of paternity. Indeed, Buñuel links Paloma's *excessive* desire specifically and self-reflexively to the cinematic desiring-machine as well as to the urban production of space in a later sequence after El Bruto has been moved, for his own safety, to a hovel on another construction site owned by Don Andrés. Paloma has come to visit him clandestinely, bringing him food and other provisions. The excuse she gave to Don Andrés was that she was *going to the cinema* with a friend: "¿Cuál película vas a ver? – Una de amor, viejito" ("What movie are you going to see? – A love story, old man"), and she gives Pedro a passionate kiss. All the while, on the sound track throughout this sequence, we hear the obtrusive sounds of construction machinery and heavy plant, so that we cannot avoid the impression that Pedro and Paloma's transgressive lovemaking, on a construction site, takes place at the center of some huge machine. That enormous deterritorializing machinery is the combined power of both the cinema-machine, with its dangerous decoding of affect, and the city-machine in which the fluidity of capital circulation is transmogrified into desire, the one intertwined inseparably with the other.

What these flows ultimately produce, for Buñuel, is schizophrenia. "Schizophrenia is the *exterior* limit of capitalism itself or the conclusion of its deepest tendency" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1990 [1972]: 246), for the schizophrenic "scrambles all the codes and is the transmitter of the decoded flows of desire" (1990 [1972]: 35). Paloma, who scrambles all the (Oedipal) codes, who is the cinematic transmitter of these decoded flows, who screams in desperation at El Bruto "¡Pégame, Bruto, pégame! … ¡Mátame, desgraciado!" ("Go on, Bruto, beat me! … Kill me, you bastard!") when he spurns her to set up house and home with the saccharine Meche, Paloma "the dove," left abject and trampled underfoot, becomes instead the Exterminating Angel. The immense desiring-machine of decoded flows is brought to a grinding halt as she accuses El Bruto of raping her to Don Andrés, setting in motion a primitive, violent reterritorialization, a recoding of affect that will, paradoxically, eject her irremediably from her Oedipal capture. Such "systemic" schizophrenia is inherent in capitalist modernity, for if "modern societies are defined by processes of decoding and deterritorialization," it is nevertheless the case that *"what they deterritorialize with one hand, they reterritorialize with the other*. These neoterritorialities are often artificial, residual, archaic; but they are archaisms having a perfectly current function, our modern way of 'imbricating,'



Figure 14.2 Unheard-of becomings: Paloma (Katy Jurado) stares at a cockerel in *El bruto*. Internacional Cinematográfica.

of sectioning off, of reintroducing code fragments …" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1990 [1972]: 279, emphasis added). In other words, Paloma resuscitates a specific code fragment – the honor code – in order to heap ruin on the simulacral family structures which have entrapped her and which have taken El Bruto away from her. This is also where Buñuel and Alcoriza break with the melodramatic code, for where we would expect the femme fatale to be punished, they make her instead into this Exterminating Angel, the very agent of destruction. And the tragic code, too, is deflected as El Bruto's death is dismissed by one of the characters as deserved, but having the happy consequence of saving the tenants from being evicted (although with Paloma presumably now the inheritor of Don Andrés' wealth, this optimism may well be misplaced).

Instead, the film ends on the ambiguous empowerment of Paloma. Critics have been much puzzled by its last image, as Paloma, scarcely able to believe the power she has unleashed, comes face to face with a cockerel (an image used to similar, arresting effect in *Los olvidados*) (Figure 14.2). A final quotation from *Anti-Oedipus* may, perhaps, illuminate its enigmatic meaning:

> For the affect is not a personal feeling, nor is it a characteristic; it is the effectuation of a power of the pack that throws the self into upheaval and makes it reel. Who has not known the violence of these animal sequences, which uproot one from humanity, if only for an instant, making one scrape at one's bread like a rodent or giving one the yellow eyes of a feline? *A fearsome involution calling us toward unheard-of becomings*. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1990 [1972]: 240, emphasis added)

It is such *unheard-of becomings* ("devenirs inouïs") which, this chapter has argued, Buñuel's Mexican films of the 1950s are ultimately attuned to. In both *Ensayo de un crimen* (through the mode of comedic dress-rehearsal) and *El bruto* (through the mode of unruly popular *arrabal* melodrama), Buñuel opens up a space in which the immense upheavals of urban modernization are played out very precisely in the interpersonal flows of affect, in the shifting sexuality of women, its ambiguous flight and capture in the circuits of commodity culture, and, above all, in its distillation in the affective machinery of cinema itself. Realizing that, like modern bourgeois society for Marx, Mexican cinema had "conjured up such gigantic means of production and of exchange, [that it] is like the sorcerer who is no longer able to control the powers of the nether world whom he has called up by his spells" (Marx and Engels, 2008 [1848]: 11), Buñuel does not eschew a radical engagement with its popular forms. Yet, not content to reproduce the axiomatic of cinema's affective capture, he frames its processes and pushes each form toward its final consequences, whether that of becoming-machine or that of becoming-animal, as we have seen. For these are but two sides of the same coin, of the monstrous becomings which Buñuel would go on to explore in a different language and in a different place in the auteurist films of the 1960s.

Notes

1 Based on official census figures for Mexico City: 906,063 in 1921; 1,229,576 in 1930; 3,050,442 in 1950; and 4,870,865 in 1960 (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía, 2011).

2 "Every film is, in the psychic sense, a mirror along the full length of the theatre. This 'being-as-those-who-contemplate' is largely down to repertory actors, lead actors, set designers, directors and cameramen. As they fashion a country also called Mexico, they do so in collaboration with those who, in stalls or seats, rework the events on screen and transform them into mythologies and family culture, into the living resource of successive generations. … The audience allows itself to be 'adopted', almost literally, by cinema, and shares its likes and dislikes: the desire to experience emotion in order to feel alive."

3 Louis Althusser (1971) famously extended Jacques Lacan's theory of the mirror stage as a point of passage for the child through the Imaginary into the Symbolic Order with his concept of "interpellation," whereby the social order calls on the individual to take up his or her place as subject of that order through the mode of (self-)recognition. Christian Metz (1981 [1977]) later applied this schema to cinema, whereby film itself is seen as the "imaginary signifier" constructing an alluring subject position for the spectator within the film's chain of signification.

4 "Tout est à faire, tous les moyens doivent être bons à employer pour ruiner les idées de *famille*, de *patrie*, de *religion*" [Everything must be done, all means should be employed to heap ruin upon the ideas of family, of fatherland, of religion] (Breton, 1985 [1930]: 77).

5 "The peculiarity of the way in which the Latin American masses erupt onto the social stage has, in the end, to do with the *double interpellation* which mobilizes them from the onset of the urban explosion: a class interpellation which is only perceived by a minority, and a national-popular interpellation which addresses the majority. … [T]he decisive role which the mass media play in this period resides in their capacity to become mediators of the interpellation which, under populism, was transforming the mass into people, and the people into Nation. An interpellation which originated with the State, but which was only effective insofar as the masses recognized in it some of their most basic demands and their modes and forms of expression."

6 Deleuze and Guattari do not, of course, claim to be on the side of capitalism either, for it operates by means of crises, reterritorializing with all its might what it cannot help but deterritorialize in its compulsive outward expansion.

7 I am here using the terminology of the French philosopher of (urban) space Henri Lefebvre (1991 [1974]: *33 passim*).

8 An axiomatic (*une axiomatique*), in the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, is a set of abstract principles of decoding and recoding which govern social existence, such that people's behavior comes to be "ruled by *abstractions*" such as "relations of production and exchange," as Marx put it in the *Grundrisse* (1993 [1858]: 164–165), rather than by other individuals (kinship ties, the priest, the despot). The major example of such an abstraction is the capitalist axiom of the equivalence between decoded flows of labor power and decoded flows of money as capital (Deleuze and Guattari, 1990 [1972]: 225, 237, 246). Money is the *realized* version of this abstraction, which in turn renders abstract and fungible all other social codes (see also Marx quoted above: "in money the community is … a real abstraction").

9 For international distribution, the title was changed to *The Criminal Life of Archibaldo de la Cruz*, which Donnell (2000) links to the popular Hispanic picaresque tradition of "recounting a life of crime" in terms of adventure and (self-reflexive) storytelling.

10 "So big and yet you're such a baby. You're nothing like a real man. When Andrés scolds you, you [get afraid and] look for a woman [skirt] to hide behind. I could die laughing."

11 "I do, but [for you to love me,] you forget something very important: I have to be willing too."

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15

Stars in the Wilderness

La Mort en ce jardin

Sarah Leahy

Much has been written on Buñuel's collaborations with major stars such as Catherine Deneuve, Silvia Pinal, and Fernando Rey. However, in the course of his career, Buñuel also worked with major stars on some films that have received very little critical attention, considered as they are as among his minor works. Notable among these are three French co-productions made in the 1950s: *Cela s'appelle l'aurore* (That Is the Dawn, 1956; Italy) with Georges Marchal and Lucia Bosè; *La Fièvre monte à El Pao* (Fever Rises in El Pao, aka Republic of Sin, 1959; Mexico) with Gérard Philipe and Maria Félix; and *La Mort en ce jardin* (Death in the Garden, aka The Diamond Hunters, 1956; Mexico), featuring Simone Signoret, Georges Marchal, Charles Vanel, and Michel Piccoli.[1] This chapter will focus on this last film because of the wide range of stars who appear in it, and because it can be seen in some ways as transitional between Buñuel's Mexican period and his return to filmmaking in Europe in the 1960s. It is also of particular interest as the first of many collaborations between Buñuel and Piccoli. Indeed, both Marchal and Piccoli were friends of Buñuel and would work with him on numerous occasions; Piccoli would turn out to be Buñuel's most frequent actor-collaborator, working with him on seven films.[2] Signoret and Vanel, on the other hand, imposed by the French producers, Dismage, were one-time collaborators. Spring 1956, then, found this cast on location in Mexico, filming the story of a group of foreign adventurers thrown together by a revolution and the challenges of survival in the jungle. This chapter will take the explicit theme of exile in *La Mort en ce jardin* as a starting point for considering how Buñuel – a director in exile – makes use of these stars who, in most cases, are seen here out of their more usual environments: costume dramas in the case of Marchal, black and white dramas with largely European, urban settings in the case of Signoret; theatre in the case of Piccoli at this stage in his career. Perhaps only Vanel, based on the recent success of *Le Salaire de la peur* (The Wages

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of Fear, Clouzot, 1953), was immediately associated with the adventure film of this type. Perhaps a shared experience of exile – albeit in very different forms – was what attracted Buñuel to the challenge of making an ostensibly French film featuring a group of French stars in the Mexican jungle.

Many critics and scholars have emphasized Buñuel's condition as an exilic filmmaker (see for example, Kinder, 1993; Chaspoul, 1997; Fuentes, 2004), discussing his multiple experiences of exile: first from Spain to France, then, following the Civil War, from Spain to the USA via France, and eventually, with the intensification of the cold war, from the USA to Mexico. As both Marsha Kinder and Cécile Chaspoul point out, Buñuel's exile was motivated by different reasons at different times: from economic hardship to political persecution and threat of death, from a desire to escape censorship to a search for better creative opportunities (Kinder, 1993: 287; Chaspoul, 1997: 113). Thus for Kinder, Buñuel's "individual experience of exile represents the whole paradigm" (1993: 287). However, as she goes on demonstrate, the way in which Buñuel has been adopted in critical discourse as the embodiment of both Spanish and Mexican cinema (however unfounded such claims may be) adds a layer of irony to the fact of his exile and, as Kinder puts it "dialogizes the auteurist and nationalist contexts, revealing that neither perspective is sufficient by itself" (1993: 291). Víctor Fuentes also emphasizes this dialogism – or "counterpoint" as he puts it, borrowing from Edward Said – highlighting the productive nature of the contradictions inherent in the condition of exile for much of Buñuel's work in Mexico, but also in films he made after his return to filmmaking in Europe in the 1960s (Fuentes, 2004: 159, 162). This counterpoint, for Fuentes, exists in the form of imported cultural and artistic influences but also personal memories: "a form of overcoming the severing of roots (with the homeland and the past) that exile imposes [which] may be understood as an answer to exile itself" (2004: 162). Even if exile, then, is not the subject of Buñuel's work, it lies at its heart in other ways, notably in the recurrence of themes of wandering and troubled identity (Chaspoul, 1997: 115), and, one might add, the impossibility of desire. Hamid Naficy offers a neat summary of Buñuel's rather messy relation to his homeland and his host nation, in his discussion of what he terms "accented cinema," arguing that the Spanish director both does and does not fall into this category, since he is simultaneously one of the best known international auteurs of film history, and considered by the English-speaking world to embody both Spanish and Mexican national cinema (Naficy, 2001: 55). As we shall see, this dialogism is present in *La Mort en ce jardin*, not least in its use of stars with strong national personas in this film which both is and is not French.

As the work of Ginette Vincendeau amongst others has shown, stars who make their names in cinemas other than Hollywood are inevitably read in relation to national cinemas (Vincendeau, 2000: 31). Indeed it can be argued that such stars come to embody the nation (or at least a particular incarnation of it). As Vincendeau has argued for the French context: "They are … connected to events and objects which support the 'imagined community' [Anderson, 1991] of the nation … French stars function as ambassadors of France" (Vincendeau, 2000: 31). In

addition, when stars venture beyond national borders, their image can frequently be seen to undergo very interesting transformations, in many cases reinforcing rather than undermining the link to the home country.

At this point, it may be useful to clarify what is meant by the term "star," and more specifically what this term means in the French context, since this is where the stars under discussion established themselves. Vincendeau offers a useful definition: "celebrated film performers who develop a 'persona' or 'myth', composed of an amalgam of their screen image and private identities, which the audience recognizes and expects from film to film, and which in turn determines the parts they play" (Vincendeau, 2000: viii). This definition helps us to decide which of our performers we should classify as stars. Signoret, who gets top billing in the credits, already had an international reputation based on her performances as prostitutes and *garces* (bitches) in French films such as Yves Allégret's *Dédée d'Anvers* (Dédée, 1947) and *Manèges* (1949), Becker's *Casque d'or* (Golden Marie, 1952) and Clouzot's *Les Diaboliques* (The Fiends, 1955), but she was also world famous at this time as the wife of Yves Montand, whom she had married in 1951, following her divorce from Yves Allégret. Signoret remained married to Montand until her death in 1985, but the height of their fame as the glamorous couple of French cinema was surely during the early to mid-1950s, before their relationship had been very publicly tested by Montand's affair with Marilyn Monroe in 1960. Georges Marchal, even if he was not as well known internationally as Signoret, was one of the leading male stars of French cinema in the 1950s. Alongside Jean Marais and Gérard Philipe he was perhaps best known for his swashbuckling performances in costume dramas such as Hunnebelle's *Les Trois mousquetaires* (The Three Musketeers, 1953), Cerchio's *Le Vicomte de Bragelonne* (The Viscount of Bragelonne, 1954), and Jolivet's *Une aventure de Gil Blas* (An Adventure of Gil Blas, 1956) and, like Signoret, was also the object of much media attention as one half of a famous cinematic couple, married to Dany Robin from 1951 until they divorced in 1969. Charles Vanel's star status is a little less clear cut. Though he was a famous actor whose career stretched over 75 years, from the silent period to just before his death in 1989, and he had enjoyed considerable success in films such as Duvivier's *La Belle équipe* (They Were Five, 1936), Grémillon's *Le Ciel est à vous* (The Woman Who Dared, 1944) as well as *Le Salaire de la peur* (for which he won Best Actor at Cannes in 1953), Vanel remained a supporting actor throughout his career. Although Vanel is credited second after Signoret in *La Mort en ce jardin*, the film does not buck this trend: his character plays a decisive role in the narrative, but in terms of *mise en scène* and screen time, he is clearly of secondary importance to Signoret and especially Marchal. It is notable that Michel Piccoli, who was just starting out in his cinema career at this time and had not yet developed a star persona, is given greater importance by the camera than Vanel, perhaps suggesting that he already possessed a "star quality," and reflecting Buñuel's fascination with this actor with whom he would go on to work more than any other. For these reasons, this chapter will focus on Piccoli rather than Vanel. In addition, there is one final performer who also needs to be taken

into consideration: Michèle Girardon. Only 18 at the time of making this, her first feature-length film, Girardon went on to appear in Howard Hawks' *Hatari!* (1962), as well as several New Wave films including *Les Amants* (The Lovers, 1957), *Le Signe du Lion* (The Sign of Leo, 1962), and *La Boulangère de Monceau* (The Bakery Girl of Monceau, 1963). Girardon will be discussed here briefly in relation to the key female star, Simone Signoret, as her performance and *mise en scène* provides an interesting contrast in the depiction of female beauty.

Of the three actors to be discussed in this chapter – Signoret, Piccoli, and Marchal – all are firmly associated with French cinema, but at the same time have developed star personas beyond their domestic market. For all of them, though, *La Mort en ce jardin* can be said to represent a kind of *dépaysement*, or dislocation, as they came to Mexico to work with the exiled Buñuel, albeit in a film made in the French language, predominantly financed with French money. The question then becomes, what happens to the images of these stars, who can be read as embodying the French nation, when they are cut adrift from their national context? In order to explore this question further, I will first consider the film itself as a liminal text, one which can be seen to sit rather awkwardly in Buñuel's filmography but also in those of some of the stars concerned. Then I will go on to examine the performances and *mise en scène* of the stars, in order to explore further this phenomenon that we might term "stars in the wilderness."

Exiles in Eden

Because it is not so well known among Buñuel's films, it is perhaps useful to include at this point a brief synopsis of *La Mort en ce jardin*. It is a film with two clear parts. The first 52 minutes of the 1 hour 40 minute film detail events leading to violent rebellion in a fictional mining town in an undisclosed country bordering Brazil,[3] when the government decides to nationalize the diamond mines. The mostly foreign miners protest, and when this is met with violent repression, the situation escalates, in spite of the efforts of a missionary, Father Lizardi (Piccoli), to persuade the miners not to take up arms. Just as this revolution is starting, Chark (Marchal), an enigmatic adventurer, arrives in town, and becomes involved in the violence, blowing up the ammunition store of the authorities. During this half of the film we also meet Djin (Signoret), a prostitute on the make, and Castin (Vanel), a miner who wishes to marry Djin and use the fortune he has amassed to take her and his deaf-mute daughter, Maria (Michèle Girardon) to Marseilles where he plans to set up a restaurant. Castin and Chark are both named as instigators of the rebellion, and are thus forced to flee. Djin, whose connection to the racket run by the corrupt local officials and the trader Chenko has been uncovered, agrees to accompany Castin and to bring his daughter. The four of them set off with the treacherous Chenko in his boat, along with Father Lizardi who is hoping to join his

mission. The second half of the film then follows this motley crew as they attempt to survive in the jungle and make their way across the border to Brazil.

If Buñuel can be seen as something of a "liminal" director, it is also true that *La Mort en ce jardin* can be seen as an "in-between" film in Buñuel's filmography in that it falls between many tendencies; indeed Buñuel himself described it as "anomalous" (1982: 215). The screenplay was adapted by Buñuel, Luis Alcoriza, and Raymond Queneau from the Belgian writer José-André Lacour's bestselling novel of the same name, published in 1954 in France. *La Mort en ce jardin* is the second of three "French" co-productions which could be said to mark the transition between Buñuel's "Mexican period" and his "return" to European filmmaking with *Viridiana* in Spain in 1961.[4] However, none of these three films offered Buñuel the same artistic freedom as either his earlier (*Un chien andalou* [An Andalusian Dog], 1929; *L'Âge d'or* [The Golden Age], 1930) or later (*Belle de jour*, 1967; *La Voie lactée* [The Milky Way], 1969; *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* [The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie], 1972; *Cet obscur objet du désir* [That Obscure Object of Desire], 1974) French filmmaking experiences (Kinder, 1993: 287). The film can be seen as "in between" in relation to national identity, genre, and style too. A French–Mexican co-production (the production companies were Dismage and Producciones Tepeyac; the producer delegate was Óscar Dancigers, Buñuel's regular collaborator), *La Mort en ce jardin* was filmed on location in Mexico by an exiled Spanish director, who had in fact taken Mexican nationality in 1949 (Kinder, 1993: 288). The film has a mixed cast, being predominantly Mexican, but with French actors in the five leading roles as we have seen. The French language of the film is particularly jarring in the first half of the film when the incongruity of diamond miners and soldiers in this fictional South American mining town speaking to each other in French, along with frequently poor post-synchronization, can be said to disrupt the realism. In terms of genre, the film draws on Spanish and Mexican traditions, such as melodrama and the picaresque, but also borrows conventions of the Western and adventure film from Hollywood. Stylistically, the film can be said to tread a line between a predominantly realist approach to depicting a corrupt regime in the first half, and a surrealist sensibility which emerges more strongly in the second half of the film, set in the jungle. Perhaps given this rather hybrid pedigree, Buñuel's account of how he struggled with the script for *La Mort en ce jardin* is not so surprising:

> My basic problem with *La Mort en ce jardin* was the screenplay which I somehow just couldn't get right. I'd wake up at two in the morning and write scenes that I'd give to Gabriel Arout at dawn so he could correct my French before I shot them that same day. Raymond Queneau showed up at one point and spent two weeks with me trying to help rewrite, but the script remained impossible. (Buñuel, 1984: 214–215)

Let us now turn to a consideration of the *mise en scène* and performance of the three key stars, to examine further how this "difficult" film sits within their careers.

Signoret, Piccoli, Marchal: Transnational Transformations?

Simone Signoret had achieved considerable success in France as well as an international reputation by 1956, with starring roles in major films such as *Casque d'or* and *Les Diaboliques*. And yet, never again in her career would Signoret replicate the success she enjoyed in France in this early part of the 1950s, and so *La Mort en ce jardin* can be said to mark the beginning of her sidelining as a major star in her home country. For Signoret, domestic sidelining was countered by international success in, for example, Clayton's *Room at the Top* (1959), Glenville's *Term of Trial* (1962), and Kramer's *Ship of Fools* (1965); yet this could be read as a form of exile, given that her star image had fallen out of favor with French producers, who preferred the younger, more nubile femininity of Brigitte Bardot and her like who now came to embody the French nation. It is interesting to compare the accounts given by Signoret and Buñuel of the filming of *La Mort en ce jardin*. Buñuel suggests that Signoret was less than happy to be working on the film, a fact which made his already difficult task even more complicated:

> Signoret posed her fair share of problems, however, because she was obviously reluctant to do the film, preferring to stay in Rome with Yves Montand. She had to go through New York on her way to join us in Mexico, so she slipped some Communist documents into her passport, hoping to be turned away by American immigration, but they let her through without a murmur. Once here and on the set, her behavior was at best unruly, at worst very destructive to the rest of the cast. In the end I had to ask a stagehand to take his measuring tape, measure a distance of one hundred meters from the camera, and there set up chairs for the "French contingent." (Buñuel, 1984: 214–215)

On the other hand, in her autobiography, Signoret describes a wonderful Mexican holiday:

> First, there was Buñuel; all the actors who have worked with him have already said it before me: spending the day with Don Luis isn't like going to work, it's fun. … And then there were my two accomplices, Vanel and Piccoli, and enormous farces, and water fights with cups of water, which turned into buckets of water. Finally, there was Mexico; I'm not talking about the countryside, I'm talking about the people. (Signoret, 1978: 142–143, my translation)

If the difference in tone is striking, it is perhaps telling that Signoret devotes only one page to the film, making no comment about her own role, nor about the film itself other than to affirm that the film is surely not Buñuel's finest. Djin is in fact the last – and one of the nastiest – of a long line of *garces* played by Signoret. She had already played women of easy virtue in *Les Démons de l'aube* (Dawn Devils, Allégret, 1945) and *Macadam* (Blistène, 1946), prostitutes in *Dédée d'Anvers*, *La*

Ronde (Ophüls, 1950), and *Casque d'or*, and scheming women in *Manèges*, *Thérèse Raquin* (Carné, 1953), and *Les Diaboliques* (Clouzot, 1955). However, her next film would be *Les Sorcières de Salem* (The Crucible, Rouleau, 1956), in which she played the upright Elizabeth Proctor, followed by *Room at the Top* (UK, Clayton, 1959) and *Adua e le compagne* (Adua and her Friends, Pietrangeli, Italy, 1960). Aside from a sketch in a portmanteau film (*Les Amours célèbres* [Boisrond], 1961) she would not star in another successful film in France until her appearance as a reluctant *résistante* in René Clément's *Le Jour et l'heure* (The Day and the Hour, 1962). For a star at the height of her fame in the mid-1950s, then (*Les Diaboliques* was the highest grossing film of Signoret's entire career with over 3.6 million spectators), *La Mort en ce jardin* represented something of a transition between two periods in her career as an actor, which she characterized in an interview as follows: "the time when I was young and pretty and I played whores, bitches and pretty young women; then the series of women in love" (Signoret, 1982: 130–132). Buñuel's film, then, offers her a last hurrah playing a *garce*, a figure with whom she had become almost synonymous.

Her character Djin is deeply unlikeable: avaricious, grasping, and cowardly, she runs a bar/brothel in the mining town where she also plies her own trade, and, as we have seen, participates in the corruption racket run between Chenko and Captain Ferrero. One other characteristic that Djin shares with many of Signoret's other characters is her agency, even if she may be regarded as perhaps the most passive of all Signoret's characters to this date, a point to which I will return later. Even so, Djin knows what she wants and does what she can to get it, though she will not succeed in obtaining it. This knowledge and determination is revealed through her performance: Signoret is famous for the way in which her characters designate the object of their desire with just a look.[5] *La Mort en ce jardin* is no exception to this: in Djin's first encounter with Chark, we see him asleep in a slightly high-angled shot which is revealed to be from her point of view as the camera pulls back to reveal her reclining next to him, leaning on one elbow to examine this specimen who has turned up in her bed. The reverse shot is withheld for a while, but when it comes a few seconds later, we see both Chark and Djin, again from a slightly high angle, so she is not introduced to us from his point of view, but rather one which eroticizes both bodies equally. Chark – whose torso is revealed in varying degrees of display throughout the film – is wearing a vest, while Djin's red robe has slipped off one shoulder. At this point, she feels his biceps, offering a backhanded compliment on his strength, before telling him that, with her, he must pay.

In her analysis of Signoret's stardom, Hayward has looked closely at *La Mort en ce jardin* alongside other films from this successful period in Signoret's career in terms of how the stars are shot. Hayward compares the solo shots of Signoret with those of Girardon and Marchal, and points out that – contrary to what we might expect given her top billing – Signoret in fact gets fewer close-ups and medium close-ups than the secondary female role of Maria, held by Michèle

Girardon, especially when they are counted as a percentage of all solo shots. Of course, it is also true to say that Signoret gets almost double the number of solo shots as Girardon – in line with what we might expect. According to Hayward, the use of the close-up and medium close-up – frequently but not always of the face – is one of the key ways in which female stars are withdrawn from their environment, fetishized and rendered passive in cinema. Hayward's close analysis demonstrates that Signoret has fewer close-ups than Girardon (one compared with three, translating as 3.33% of her solo shots as opposed to 18.75%) (Hayward, 2004: 90). As for the male stars, Marchal has one close-up as opposed to Piccoli's three (2.22% compared with 12% of all solo shots), but interestingly these are all of their hands, emphasizing action over appearance.

Hayward draws two main conclusions from this analysis: firstly, that Signoret's characters are not passive, but rather occupy active roles within the narrative; and secondly that she is not fetishized in the way that female stars often were on screen in the classic cinema.[6] We might counter that Djin – whose divisive, cruel outbursts reveal her to be completely self-centered and who does nothing to help the group survive – is hardly an active heroine. And yet, Hayward argues, "even in *La Mort en ce jardin*, this holds true, for the enigma is Maria – how did she lose her voice, we wonder, since at the end of all the trauma, and thanks to Chark's perseverance, she gets it back" (Hayward, 2004: 93). It is not clear exactly what Hayward means by this last comment, since Maria does not actually speak at the end of the film. However, she does produce the only sounds she makes in the film – a couple of anguished cries as she throws herself on Chark to stop him from shooting her dangerously insane father. Hayward's point that Maria is the more enigmatic of the two women is surely true. Since Maria cannot speak, we know little of her desires and goals. We know nothing of her origins: who her mother was or why she is deaf and mute. If she can be said to develop into a more rounded character in the second part of the film, faced with the horrors of the jungle, and also through her disagreement with Lizardi over the jewels she finds in the plane wreckage, she still cannot be described as having agency: rather she follows her father, then either Lizardi and Chark. On the other hand, even though Djin does not, as Hayward points out, have agency over her narrative resolution[7] – she is shot dead by Castin who has gone mad – she does have agency over her desire up to that point in the film, however perverse those desires may be. She is upfront about her motivations ("I'm mercenary," she says to Chark, and, later on to Alberto, "I never said I was afraid of money"). At other times her agenda is revealed through performance rather than words, as when she pretends to agree to Castin's proposal. We recognize that this is purely financially motivated and that she has no intention of holding to it, as we (though not he) can see from her rapid mood change, her facial expressions and gestures which give the lie to her words: "I'm no longer alone, since we're together." At other times, her mask does not so much slip as get torn off in sheer panic: immediately prior to accepting Castin's proposal, faced with a

mob searching for him, her only thought is to get him out of her house in order to avoid incrimination; in the jungle, she verbally abuses Castin, belittling his dreams and blaming him for her situation, and striking Maria when she tries to comfort her. Signoret's performance in these hysterical outbursts is repulsive as she works herself up to a point of violence because it reveals an utterly self-centered woman. Even at the end of the film, when it seems she is reformed by love for Chark, this reading is hard to sustain. Having retrieved the diamond jewelry that Father Lizardi has forbidden Maria from taking from the plane wreckage, she offers it, and herself, to Chark: "It's yours, and the girl with it," suggesting that they should make their escape. Her self-centeredness re-emerges once again when Chark counters that he is not prepared to leave without Maria, stating that she does not want to share him, and reproaching him for not trusting her, even though she has done nothing to earn his trust. Her death occurs almost immediately after this exchange, as she stands up to light her cigarette. The long shot from Castin's point of view reveals her in full evening dress illuminated by the fire; she cuts a strange figure in the jungle as she falls gracefully to the ground as the sniper's bullet hits its target. Her death could easily be read as a punishment for the femme fatale: once dangers of the jungle have receded and salvation appears assured, she has gone back to her venal ways. And yet, the film appears to eschew such conventional readings: we do not have a sense that Castin's bullets are aimed at individuals; rather they are aimed by chance at those who present themselves as targets. We might further argue that the *mise en scène* of Signoret in the second part of the film – the unglamorous costume and lighting – undercuts any attempt to characterize her as the classic femme fatale. This was Signoret's only color film in this period, but the color does little for her. As Hayward has pointed out, the greenish hue of the Eastmancolor, put to great effect in filming the jungle, reflects off the skin of the characters, but most particularly Djin. Her clothes and body are filthy even compared with those of her companions – and especially Maria – as she falls more often. Seen through her torn, filthy clothes her skin – far from the tempting flesh glimpsed in the first part of the film – has taken on a sickly hue, and yet, the worse she looks, the nicer she becomes, actually showing some concern for her fellow travellers (Hayward, 2004: 126–127).

However, once Djin recovers her glamorous image, dressing up in evening gown and make-up found in the plane's wreckage, her old self returns, as we have seen. The same can be said of Castin's other victim, Father Lizardi, who immediately forgets the humanist insights he has encountered along the way in favor of a return to blind faith. Perhaps, then, Castin's bullets are not punishing the femme fatale or the deceitful (as Castin sees it) priest, but rather the two people who refuse to learn from their experiences.

This brings us to a consideration of Michel Piccoli's performance as Father Lizardi. In his autobiography, Buñuel remembers *La Mort en ce jardin* as the film which brought him to know Michel Piccoli: "It was thanks to this anomalous film that I met Michel Piccoli, with whom I've since made several films and who has

become one of my closest friends. I love and admire him for his unfailing sense of humor, his generosity, his whimsy, and the respect he never shows me" (Buñuel, 1984: 215).[8] The naive and rather blinkered priest is rather different from the characters Piccoli would play in Buñuel's later films – perverse and frequently rather sinister figures who tend to act as a catalyst for others' deviant behavior. Rather, Piccoli's depiction of Father Lizardi is said by some critics to offer a sketch for Buñuel's next film, *Nazarín* (1959), in which the blind faith and attempts to live a good and holy life of another priest (played by Francisco Rabal) lead to his ostracism and rejection by society (Kyrou, 1963: 68; Thirard, 2000: 83).

In Piccoli's own account of events, it was thanks to his prior friendship with Buñuel that he got the part of the priest, in spite of his physical unsuitability to play a character described in the screenplay as round and middle-aged (Piccoli and Lacombe, 1976: 165). As played by Piccoli, Lizardi is quite different from this description: elegant in his white suit and knee-high boots, and sporting a fine watch (one of those donated to his order by Northern Refineries), his first appearance in the film makes it clear that Father Lizardi, as the innkeeper puts it to Chark, is "someone." He enters the bar where the miners have regrouped following the failure of their negotiations with Captain Ferrero, and where they are deciding on their next move. Lizardi enters in a long shot, center frame, standing out in his white suit, and then the camera zooms to a medium shot as he responds to Alberto's logic that 40 soldiers will not dare to attack two hundred miners if they stick together with the riposte: "And what if they dared?" The following shot is an extreme long shot of the bar from a slightly high angle, and again Lizardi is center frame, his position highlighted by the men who are now looking at him instead of Alberto as he makes his way further into the bar and continues to try to dissuade the men from confronting the authorities. Lizardi's logic is somewhat confused at this point: he starts by telling them that they risk a massacre for nothing, as more troops are on their way, but his parting rebuke is a biblical quote: "All they who take the sword shall perish by the sword" (Matthew 26:52), accompanied by a schoolmasterly wagging finger. Indeed, for a character who has dominated the frame so dramatically in the scene, he is singularly unimposing in this battle of wills with the miners' leaders. By this point relegated to the extreme left-hand edge of the frame, he looks around, taking account of the hostility of the miners, before walking off (toward the camera) with a rather petulant shrug. For a secondary character, played by an actor who was still establishing a reputation, this rather ostentatious entrance, combined with the unusual percentage of close and medium close-ups of Father Lizardi throughout a film which generally prefers longer shots, could be seen as an indication of Buñuel's obvious interest in this character. Critics such as Francisco Aranda have seen Lizardi as "a figure with so many facets that he can be regarded as one of the most interesting figures in all Buñuel's work" (Aranda, 1975: 174), while both Ado Kyrou and Freddy Buache have pointed out that this priest whose human judgment is blinded by his faith is clearly one for whom Buñuel has much sympathy, even if he emphatically does not

share his faith (Kyrou, 1963: 68–72; Buache, 1973: 86–87). One of Father Lizardi's recurring refrains is "I will answer for him" or "I'll take the responsibility," always uttered firmly and with complete certainly as he intervenes in various situations. Each time, however, the consequences are catastrophic as his faith is shown to be misplaced, and the exact circumstances he has promised to prevent come to pass. Blinkered by his faith, Lizardi is unable to learn from his mistakes, retaining his naivety no matter how often he is proved wrong.

Though his faith is misplaced, it is nonetheless genuine, and he pays for this with his life. If he is brave in that he is prepared to risk his own life, he is also a fool, as doing so also puts others in danger. Piccoli plays this character with a sense of innocence yet firmness of purpose that renders him both sympathetic and frustrating. One example of this is when he searches for Castin at Djin's house. Piccoli's performance here reveals all the flawed logic of Lizardi's faith and also renders the priest extremely young and vulnerable. Firstly, he averts his gaze from Djin, looking down at his hands, holding his hat in front of him, only glancing briefly at her after he has referred to her as unworthy of Castin. Secondly, even though he knows Castin well, he does not question the army's story, accusing him of having participated in the violence in spite of his protests to the contrary and insisting that Castin should give himself up in order to save the innocent hostages. Tall and thin, his white suit contrasting with Djin's red robe, Lizardi's figure should be dominant in this scene, yet his body language is almost apologetic as he continually bows his head; his shoulders are rounded as he holds his hat in front of him, and he fails to impose his viewpoint: the more firmly he insists on Castin giving himself up, the less inclined Castin is to do so.

The situation is taken out of his hands with the arrival of a mob looking for Castin to hand him over for the reward money. When eventually they enter Djin's room where Castin is hiding in the cupboard, they come face to face with Lizardi. Their shock at finding the priest in the prostitute's room is total. A medium shot shows Lizardi's confused body language: rather than standing proud (why should he not also be looking for Castin there?) he bows his head, covered with shame at being found in this place, and thus invites the derision of those who wish to sell Castin out. Piccoli's gestures during this scene – the way he cannot look at Djin, refers to her contemptuously as "cette personne" (this individual), and his reaction when found in her room – suggest that his thoughts may not have been as pure as his professed motive in coming to her house. Through Piccoli's performance, Lizardi is thus transformed as a character: from an apparently conformist upholder of the status quo, he is revealed as a complex and more sympathetic individual: sexually confused and doubting, yet at the same time unquestioning in his adherence to his religious faith and in his attempts to impose it on others.

Let us now turn to the final star to be discussed. A good friend of Buñuel, Georges Marchal came to *La Mort en ce jardin* fresh from having worked with him earlier that year on *Cela s'appelle l'aurore*, shot in Corsica. They would go on to

make a further two films together: *Belle de jour* and *La Voie lactée*. In addition to his roles in swashbuckling historical dramas, he also had played some romantic leads (e.g., *Fausse alerte* [False Alarm], Baroncelli, 1945) and some roles in the adventure genre (e.g., *Les Démons de l'aube*, Allégret, 1946). Hayward describes him in her recent work on French costume drama: "virile and muscular … Marchal … is typified by no-nonsense roles and, as such, very much of a straight man in his swashbuckling endeavours … In some ways he is more ordinary, easier for men to identify with, and so he comes over very much as a man's man" (Hayward, 2010: 68). Hayward goes on to suggest that in the mid-1950s, Marchal was "a man desperate to assert his virility over his matinee idol status" (2010: 142). The taciturn action-man, Chark, who is not afraid of using violence against men or women if he feels they merit it, would appear to offer Marchal just such an opportunity.

Marchal's performance in this role is muscular: Chark is arguably the most eroticized character (including Djin), with his torso on display for almost the entire film. This is rendered explicitly erotic in the beginning of the film under Djin's admiring gaze, as she, half-mocking, comments on his muscles: "Strong men are always attractive" (Figure 15.1). Even at the end of the film, when Chark returns to the group having found the plane wreck wearing a clean shirt, this hangs open revealing his tanned and toned body. In a later scene between Chark and Djin, although she comments on his gaze on her, again, it is arguably his body which is the more eroticized of the two. While she lowers her head to avoid his gaze at first, protesting that she is ugly (to which he replies, "You don't look that great"), the profile shot flatters Marchal, a key light from the left highlighting his blond hair



Figure 15.1 Djin (Signoret) designates the object of her desire with her gaze in *La mort en ce jardin*. Dismages and Producciones Tepeyac.

and the brown skin of his face and muscular chest. Signoret, on the other hand, has her back to this light, and remains filthy, her skin retaining a greenish hue even though the backdrop is no longer the jungle but the lake they must cross to reach Brazil. The framing is also interesting in this scene. Since Marchal is taller, his body is framed to the waist, but the shorter Signoret is cut off just below the breasts. Normally this might be seen as highlighting a particular attribute, yet in this case, her shapeless, filthy shirt removes any erotic potential.

And yet, as Chark, Marchal is no mere object of contemplation: his masculinity is also expressed through his activity and his efficiency. Quick and strong, he moves economically and with stealth when he needs to. He shows a rather twisted sense of humor when he stands on the laces of Maria's new boots, preventing her from moving, but does not hesitate to use his strength when she attacks him, nor to deal rather peremptorily with Castin when he intervenes on behalf of his daughter: "Fathers shouldn't play the fool," Chark tells him, as he grabs him by the shirt front and pushes him against a pillar. Opportunist, he formulates and carries out his plans, allowing no time for doubt. Noticing ink on the hands of Father Lizardi who has entered the prison to administer the last rites to another prisoner, Chark asks the priest to get him a pen to write to his mother. No sooner is this in his hand than he uses it as a weapon to escape. On his way out, he notices the ammunition store, and later retraces his steps in order to blow it up. He does not hesitate to take advantage of others' weakness to seize the upper hand: on Chenko's boat, when Djin, who sees the way the wind is blowing, comes to him and offers him her share of the reward for turning him in, he beats her – without letting go of the tiller. He patronizes Lizardi ("My little priest, I'm the one in charge here") and gives orders to Castin who obeys them without question, until his madness takes over and he increasingly enters his own world. In the jungle, his determination to keep moving is what motivates the group and ensures their survival. He may not have much luck in searching for food, but he does not give up. Although it is Father Lizardi who spots the snake, it is Chark who beheads it with a single machete blow. And if the snake is devoured by ants before they can eat it, this is because Chark has to light the fire as well as prepare the carcass.

Apparently "straightforward" in his hyper-masculinity, in other ways, however, Chark is the most enigmatic figure of the lot. It is notable that during the entire film we learn nothing about his past, nor his future goals: he is entirely focused on surviving the current situation. Apparently an atheist and anti-authoritarian (his greeting to the troops lined up to fire on the protesting crowd of miners is to give them the finger, and he only prostrates himself in front of the communion host when he is knocked down), he is first and foremost pragmatic: he is willing to do what he needs to survive, including shooting a man in the back. If he has any beliefs, they are anarchist in nature. (We never find out if he was involved in the bank robbery, but if we assume this is the source of his fortune, it could be interpreted as an anarchist act.) And yet, he has opportunities to abandon the group, and though this would probably give him a better chance of survival, at least twice

he does not do this. On the first occasion, he returns to the group having found the plane wreckage. On the second occasion, he refuses to run off with Djin because he does not want to leave Maria to her fate. Having taken on the role of leader, he seems determined to follow through with this.

Following his 1956 Buñuelian adventures, Marchal went on to star in a number of peplums (*La Rivolta dei gladiatori* [The Gladiators' Revolt], Cottafavi, 1958; *Nel segno di Roma* [Under the Sign of Rome], Brignone, 1959; *Le Legioni di Cleopatra* [Cleopatra's Legions], Cottafavi, 1960; *Il colosso di Rodi* [The Colossus of Rhodes], Leone, 1961; *Ulisse contro Ercole* [Ulysses versus Hercules], Caiano, 1962). At the same time, he continued to pursue a career in French mainstream cinema, where he had clearly failed to entirely throw off his association with the costume picture, even if *Austerlitz* (Gance, 1960) and *Napoleon II: L'Aiglon* (Napoleon II: Imperial Eagle, Boissol, 1961) are far from the swashbuckling adventures of D'Artagnan or Gil Blas. It would seem then, that his career did take a rather more virile turn following this somewhat equivocal yet unambiguously heroic role.

To conclude, as well as offering an analysis of their individual performances, this chapter has shown the ways in which the star images of the three key performers both influenced and were influenced by their roles in *La Mort en ce jardin*. For Marchal, Signoret, and Piccoli, this film can arguably be seen as an interlude which signaled new departures in their careers. For Piccoli, best known today for his prolific and extensive career as a star of international art cinema, this was the first in a long line of collaborations with major auteurs – Godard, Ferreri, Chabrol, Rivette, Oliveira – not least among whom was Buñuel himself. For Marchal, the film signaled a shift in emphasis, from the "feminine" appeal of the swashbuckling hero, to the more "masculine" world of the peplum or the "great men" strand of the historical film. His collaboration with Buñuel also appears to have opened up Italian cinema to him. And finally, if as Signoret remarked, *La Mort en ce jardin* is not one of Buñuel's masterpieces, it must also be said that Djin is not one of her greatest roles. And yet, this character can be said to close one chapter in her career and herald the more international phase of her stardom, with her Oscar-winning role in *Room at the Top*, as well as leading parts in US and Italian films. However, the price for this international fame was arguably the fading of her star at home in France, where her more mature, active brand of femininity was being passed over in favor of the new *femme-enfant*.

The narrative of *La Mort en ce jardin*, featuring an aimless revolution followed by equally directionless wandering round in circles in search of food and shelter which, when it finally does materialize, is due to chance and not thanks to their agency, foreshadows many of Buñuel's later films and perhaps most notably *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie*. As Chaspoul has argued in an article focusing on exile in the later work of Buñuel, the recurring theme of wandering (*errance*) is an effect of exile (Chaspoul, 1997: 113–115). The characters in *La Mort en ce jardin* – and to a certain extent the stars who play them – are, like many others in Buñuel's *oeuvre*: "displaced characters, who seem to never really succeed in inhabiting the

places they find themselves in" (1997: 115). For the stars concerned, then, this wandering in the Mexican jungle, in the liminal space between national cinemas of the co-production, enabled them to extend and expand their repertoire, even in the case of Signoret whose role is almost a caricature of her *garce* image. For these three stars, at least, then, it seems that this venture into Buñuel's wilderness, though it certainly did not break with their domestic star personas, did bring with it the promise of new territories for exploration.

Notes

1 Fuentes (2004: 165) gives the English title for *La Fièvre monte à El Pao* as *The Ambitious Ones*. *La Mort en ce jardin*, whose French title is clearly a play on Buñuel's friend Gabriel García Lorca's play *Amór en el jardín*, was released in the UK under the title *Evil Eden*.

2 The other films are *Le Journal d'une femme de chambre* (The Diary of a Chambermaid, 1964), *Belle de jour* (1967), *La Voie lactée* (The Milky Way, 1969), *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* (The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie, 1972), and *Le Fantôme de la liberté* (The Phantom of Liberty, 1974), as well as an uncredited voice part in *Cet obscur objet du désir* (That Obscure Object of Desire, 1977).

3 The town is identified in the film in a decree placing a price on Castin and Chark's heads. Luc Moullet and Susan Hayward refer to it as, respectively, Cuchazo and Cuchazu (Hayward, 2004: 125).

4 Of course, this "return" was not definitive: Buñuel continued to live in Mexico until his death, and went on to make *El Ángel exterminador* (The Exterminating Angel, 1962) and *Simón del desierto* (Simon of the Desert, 1965) there.

5 We can see this in many of her films, but perhaps most notably in *Dédée d'Anvers* and *Casque d'or*. See Leahy and Hayward (2000: 82–83) and Leahy (2007: 42) for further discussion of this.

6 See Laura Mulvey on visual pleasure and narrative cinema (1975).

7 This is the only film in this early part of Signoret's career in which this is the case.

8 Interestingly, Michel Piccoli gives a different account of their meeting in his memoirs, describing how he invited Buñuel to come to a play he was performing in (Piccoli and Lacombe, 1976: 146). Following this meeting in the mid-1950s, a friendship developed between the two men, but it was not until Piccoli auditioned for the role of the priest in *La Mort en ce jardin* that the two men came to work together on a film.

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16

Transitional Triptych

The Traps of International Cinemas in Buñuel's *Cela s'appelle l'aurore*, *La Mort en ce jardin*, and *La Fièvre monte à El Pao*

Ernesto R. Acevedo-Muñoz

Luis Buñuel's life and career has commonly been broken down by critics matching the movies with certain periods and/or locales. Those episodes of Luis Buñuel's creative career, at least in very general terms, are aligned with the creation of the films that have defined his profile as auteur. Thus we recognize "the Surrealist period" (1928–1932), the Filmófono studio years and the Spanish Civil War, the New York/Los Angeles US detour, the Mexican exile (after 1946), the return caused by the attention afforded to *Los olvidados* (The Forgotten Ones, aka The Young and the Damned, 1950), and the surge in notoriety and critical success that followed in the decades of the 1960s and 1970s. With the exceptions of *Los olvidados*, *Él* (This Strange Passion, 1952), *Robinson Crusoe*, aka *The Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1952), *Ensayo de un crimen*, aka *La vida criminal de Archibaldo de la Cruz* (Rehearsal for a Crime, aka The Criminal Life of Archibaldo de la Cruz, 1955), and *Nazarín* (1958), it is from *Viridiana* (1961) to *Cet obscure objet du désir* (That Obscure Object of Desire, 1977) that we seem to recognize the real Luis Buñuel, the one who had been only briefly glimpsed under the weight of the Mexican cinema of the 1950s.

The major Mexican period has been the subject of various important works since Víctor Fuentes' *Buñuel en México: Iluminaciones sobre una pantalla pobre* (1993) and my own *Buñuel and Mexico: The Crisis of National Cinema* (2003). What continues to be rare, especially in US and UK criticism, is the effort to properly place, or discover the logic of, the three films Luis Buñuel made between 1955 and 1959 that are neither Mexican, nor spoken in Spanish: *Cela s'appelle l'aurore* (That Is the Dawn,

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1955), *La Mort en ce jardin* (Death in the Garden, aka The Diamond Hunters, 1956), and *La Fièvre monte à El Pao* (Fever Rises at El Pao, aka Republic of Sin, 1959). Like *Robinson Crusoe* and *The Young One* (1960), which were co-productions between US and Mexican interests, these three are French co-productions with Italy and Mexico respectively. They were arguably part of Buñuel's efforts to free himself from the generic, artistic, and financial constraints of the Mexican film industry, where he had seen some success, but where Buñuel thought his creative independence and artistic options were limited (de la Colina and Pérez Turrent, 1993: 116–117). Thus, it is also telling that two of these transitional, transnational movies (*Robinson Crusoe* and *La Mort en ce jardin*) were Luis Buñuel's first color films. Yet, the triptych of French/Mexican/Italian co-productions between 1955 and 1959 continue to be, in some ways, oddities in Buñuel's career; he called *La Mort en ce jardin* "an anomaly" (Buñuel and Carrière, 1983: 215). These are three films in search of an author, in search of an identity, a "degradation" of his themes (Rebolledo, 1964: 95), appraising Buñuel's previous works while promising and practicing many of the stylistic and artistic trends that were to define his better known films of the 1960s and 1970s. In this chapter I will explore the motifs and patterns seen in these movies and the ways in which they announce, rehearse, and complement Buñuel's canonical films.

Cela s'appelle l'aurore

After *Robinson Crusoe*, one of Luis Buñuel's earliest, earnest efforts to gain exposure to international markets was *Cela s'appelle l'aurore*, a film that he considered among his own favorites (de la Colina and Pérez Turrent, 1993: 132). Based on the homonymous novel by Emmanuel Roblès published in 1952, the potentially melodramatic plot involves a rape, a murder, a suicide, and a romantic triangle set in Sardinia. While none of these are normally Buñuelian characteristics, and the Italian locale was atypical for him, the director was attracted to the novel and engaged the services of the surrealist writer Jean Ferry to work on the screenplay (Monegal, 1993: 235). As always, Buñuel exercises in this film an economy of narrative means that is recognizable throughout his career, with an interest in subverting romantic and narrative clichés in a way that is potentially satirical. The movie, made shortly after *Ensayo de un crimen*, seems like a departure from the Surrealist-psychoanalytic topics of *Ensayo de un crimen* and *Él*, with its overtly melodramatic content and its lack of attention to character psychology. Yet, its somewhat political plot, involving a physician in the service of an abusive factory owner who protects the man's murderer, announces the social unrest context seen later in *La Mort en ce jardin* and *La Fièvre monte à El Pao*.

The setting is a port city in Sardinia, in the mid-1950s. The film opens with an unidentified woman, in her early thirties, sitting by the seafront, where she observes stray cats (a recurring motif in the movie), itinerant children at play, and

a man violently beating a mule on the street. This early scene of unwarranted violence, reminiscent of the dead donkeys in *Un chien andalou* (An Andalusian Dog, 1929) and *Las Hurdes*, aka *Tierra sin pan* (Land without Bread, 1932), visibly upsets the woman, who runs away. In a scene that could be taken from *Los olvidados*, the woman sees a group of boys in rags playing war games in the street with makeshift wood guns and sticks. The boys pretend to march as soldiers and stage a mock execution. As in *La Mort en ce jardin* and *Le Fantôme de la liberté* (The Phantom of Liberty, 1974), this scene of unusual, pretend violence sets up a dark tone for the movie, and prefigures later plot content. The children throw rocks at each other, another reference to *Los olvidados* and the type of arbitrary violence that Buñuel points to repeatedly in his career. Visibly upset, the woman leans over a public water faucet, fatigued, and adopts a pose seen in *Las Hurdes*, where the crew films a little sick girl on the street in that movie's characteristically detached emotional tone. This narrative lead remains unresolved until later in the first act, a practice that is common in these three films: linear narratives with multiple false leads and inconclusive action.

In the following scene, Buñuel arbitrarily introduces the presumed antagonist, the factory and farm owner Gorzone (Jean-Jacques Delbo) as he complains about a peaceful work-stop by his factory workers. The scene cuts to the interior of the clinic where we first see Dr Valerio (Georges Marchal) tending to a wounded man, beaten up by factory guards. A first conflict in the young doctor's feelings and loyalties is then introduced: Valerio receives a call about his wife having had an accident, but he quickly returns to tending to the wounded man. It is apparent here, as will be confirmed shortly thereafter, that Valerio is somewhat estranged from his wife, while his interest in the workers' welfare seems genuine. Gorzone, in contrast, shows no interest in the sick man, and is only concerned with how soon the man can get back to work. The conflicts of desire are immediately apparent: Gorzone seems much more interested in the young, beautiful nurse assisting Valerio, who he first sees through the grated windows from outside the clinic, than in the man's injuries. Like Don Mateo much later in *Cet obscur objet du désir*, and Franciso earlier in *Él*, both of whom we see many times observing Conchita/Gloria through glass doors, grated gates, and windows, Gorzone is visibly separated from the young, naive, disempowered object of desire, a motif also seen in *Cela s'appelle l'aurore* (Tesson, 1995: 124–125). And like the government institutions represented in *La Mort en ce jardin* and *La Fièvre monte à El Pao*, the "cruel" capitalist figure is distracted by lust, even in the face of injustice. This conflict in these films is not restricted to power figures: eventually, the good Dr Valerio will face an identical conflict. Without revealing narrative information, Buñuel sets up early in *Cela s'appelle l'aurore* three essential themes of his entire *oeuvre*: arbitrary violence, a class dispute between workers and capitalists, and the visible tensions that arise between duty, morality, and desire. These patterns are recurring in Buñuel's films, and here they remind us of more canonical films: *Los olvidados*, *Él*, *Cet obscur objet du désir*, *Viridiana*, and *Tristana* (1970). With little exposition, and yet in an

elegant and economic style, *Cela s'appelle l'aurore* already unfolds as a recognizably Buñuelian world.

A typical narrative non sequitur shows the incongruous sight of a man in shorts and a top hat, a big cigar clenched between his teeth, doing silly, circus-type tricks on a bicycle in the middle of the street. The man plays a violin, crouched on the moving bicycle frame, as the woman from the opening sequence observes from a sidewalk café. Valerio comes into the scene, and sits with her, revealing that she is the distressed wife, Angela (Nelly Bourgeaud). The cause of her complaints is that she is bored, neglected by the busy husband, "tired of reading novels." Paradoxically, while the street acrobat comically tries to entertain her, the husband is thoroughly indifferent, dismissive of her typically bourgeois ennui. "I hate this country," she says, and accuses Valerio of being unfair. Tellingly, she desires to return to the Continent, to Nice, to be with her father. This husband/father conflict is especially interesting for Buñuel, who often set up younger women with older men in relationships that were marked by Oedipal and other conflicts of desire, such as the incestuous implications of the central relationships seen in *Viridiana* and *Tristana*. In this case, the woman expresses her wish to substitute husband for father. That night in the bedroom, Angela continues to try to persuade Valerio to return to France. The bedroom features one of those enormous, elaborate brass beds that were so real, yet so distinctly out of place in *Los olvidados*, and which are recurring in Buñuel's iconography. The wife's resentment is ultimately class-based: while the young, idealist Valerio wants to serve the workers and live with his modest salary, she insists that in Nice he could have his own practice, and she could return to her father, her friends, and her "life." As in many parallel scenes in Buñuel's films, the potentially romantic setting of a man and woman in bed is abruptly interrupted, or derailed, by something trivial. Just as the two start to kiss, the moment is broken by a hairpin pricking Valerio under his head. The scene quickly fades to a shot of the loud horn of a boat at the pier, announcing its departure, Angela on board. Whether Angela and Valerio in fact had sexual relations that evening is not only unclear, but the incongruous, comical editing and sound effects completely neutralize the melodramatic content (Figure 16.1).

Valerio is relieved by the wife's departure, and quickly returns to his interest: the town's sick and poor. At his home office, he takes care of a child, but his kindness is quickly contrasted with the mother's cruelty toward the children. She is hesitant to come back for a follow-up visit, and smacks her other child for playing with the doctor's pen. Buñuel is not condescending of the poor, nor does he try to portray them with liberal, bourgeois pity, but with a parallel form of violence in which need often suppresses compassion, a theme developed in *Las Hurdes* and *Los olvidados* and elaborated in *Viridiana*. One of the patients becomes interested in some photographic artwork in the doctor's quarters: it appears to be a photograph of a stone bust of Jesus Christ, defaced by electrical cables and ceramic electric isolation over its face. It is absurd, out of place, but an eloquent reminder of the constant presence of heretical, sacrilegious, and anti-religious characters, comments,



Figure 16.1 Nelly Borgeaud and Georges Marchal in *Cela s'appelle l'aurore*. The couple in bed or lying down motif is insistent in these films. Les Films Marceau and Laetitia Film.

objects, and practices that are so essential to Buñuel's Catholic upbringing and surrealist conversion. Especially telling is the fact that this object is surrealist in style, yet more offensive as art than as a religious object. The patient, "an atheist," wants an explanation, but Valerio brushes it off with a cryptic and condescending phrase: "You'll never understand the beauty of war." Gratuitous and slightly offensive, this visual gag has a truly surrealist origin. Buñuel insisted that upon the invasion of North Africa in World War II, the Americans, in need of re-establishing telegraphic lines, had for practical reasons used the standing statue of Jesus instead of removing it and planting a new telegraph pole. Valerio, a veteran of the African campaigns, simply would have taken the photograph as a war souvenir (de la Colina and Pérez Turrent, 1993: 136). Violence is arbitrary and, Buñuel suggests, so is the coincidence between art and real life (Figure 16.2).

In the film's first act Buñuel focuses on Valerio's good nature and selfless service to the people of the village. He genuinely wants to do the right thing, and is even willing to sacrifice his own marriage for it. Like other "saintly" figures in Buñuel's career – the eponymous characters in *Simón del desierto* (Simon of the Desert, 1965), *Viridiana*, and *Nazarín* – Valerio, however, will soon have to confront the limitations and realities of his own persona, and of the social context around him: the moral dilemma at the center of this story. When Valerio visits the sick, bedridden wife of one of Gorzone's workers, a farmhand named Sandro (Gianni Esposito), he is sympathetic, yet honest, admitting to the man that there is not much he can do, because, he says, this is "a rich person's disease." In contrast to Valerio and Angela's scene earlier in the movie, Sandro and his wife, Magda



Figure 16.2 The telegraphic Jesus in *Cela s'appelle l'aurore*. Les Films Marceau and Laetitia Film.

(Brigitte Elloy), are caring and loving with each other; their bedroom scene is sharply contrasted to Dr and Mme Valerio's. Magda, near death, remains clearly devoted to her husband, and only wants to "be where [he] is."

It is Sandro and Magda's predicament that becomes the ultimate source of conflict between Valerio and the farm and factory owner, Gorzone. Sandro, a former war buddy of Valerio, is the caretaker of Gorzone's farm, but has neglected his duties while taking care of his sick wife. Gorzone scolds Sandro and threatens to have him thrown off the property if he does not comply with his duties. Valerio is later summoned to treat a rape victim and visits the house with Inspector Fasaro (Julien Bertheau). While preparing to tend to the victim, Valerio first sets eyes on a beautiful stranger, the widow Mme Clara Bernardi (Lucia Bosè). Valerio is clearly disturbed by the sight of the woman, with whom he quickly exchanges desiring glances, and it soon becomes apparent that she constitutes a new conflict: not only with his estranged wife, but, more importantly, with his duties to the town's people. While the rape suspect is locked in a chicken coop by the victim's relatives, Valerio, even during the examination, is distracted by Clara. A shot shows Valerio glancing between the victim's legs (a child, maybe eight years of age). Buñuel would revisit this image of the young child, her legs spread slightly apart, some

years later in *Viridiana* (with Rita and the jump-rope with which Don Jaime hangs himself), and in *Le Journal d'une femme de chambre* (Diary of a Chambermaid, 1963), where the rape and murder of another girl stirs the shift of loyalties and alliances between several characters. In *Cela s'appelle l'aurore*, though, Buñuel rehearses the striking image of the young girl's slightly spread legs, and sets around its context the beginning of the movie's central love affair. Moreover, after inspecting the girl for an instant, Valerio dismissively covers her with the sheets with the phrase "That's it." Brushing off the traumatic scene, Valerio tells the concerned relatives that "it's not grave." Uncharacteristically, he is much more interested in the widow Bernardi. This contrast in a character that has, so far, been treated as a selfless, giving individual, with eyes only for the needy around him, is particularly important in this movie: after the exchange of glances indicating the mutual desire (across the bed from the raped child), it is as if Valerio and Clara enter a type of *amour fou* in which nothing else matters. In either case, it is paradoxically the child's rape that gives them the opportunity to meet and eventually fall in love (Tesson, 1995: 129). Desire always gets in the way of reason, a surrealist principle that Buñuel had treated initially in *Un chien andalou* and *L'Âge d'or* (The Golden Age, 1930), and even worked into his early Mexican films *Susana*, aka *Carne y demonio* (Susana, aka The Devil and the Flesh) (1950), *Él*, and *El bruto* (*The Brute*, 1953). In *Cela s'appelle l'aurore* it has been aligned with the antagonistic character of Gorzone, while Valerio has always put duty ahead of desire. It is especially cruel that this "romantic" introduction is, quite suggestively, negotiated over the violated body of a child. In contrast to the comical treatment of Valerio and Angela's bedroom scene, this one between Valerio and Clara can be ultimately disturbing. Soon after, with little narrative development, Valerio and Clara are clearly romantically involved. While Gorzone makes futile efforts to find Valerio to care for his slightly injured child, Valerio has been wooing Clara. Buñuel reduces the courting sequence to two short scenes: two lines of dialogue, one exchange of glances, and an extreme long shot of the two walking on a beach, momentarily kissing.

With a shot of crashing waves on a beach, and a medium shot of a window at night, Buñuel suggests that the romance has been consummated. The movie's narrative center has shifted, and the two lovers are seen sneaking around to their nightly assignations. Restricted to the romantic segment of the story, Buñuel plays around the content with irreverence and arbitrary gestures. Inexplicably, Valerio takes off his shoes and socks before dinner, and lies on a cot in the dining room, and gives Clara a tortoise he's found on the street as a gift. "I like it a lot," she says of the animal, before dropping it on the floor, on its back. While, presumably, the couple kiss, Buñuel retains the camera on top of the animal, struggling to turn itself over. The tortoise finally succeeds and walks away, but the ellipsis that follows is as close as Buñuel gets to suggesting sexual activity: an untouched dinner table, the two lovers simply staring at each other in bed, and the recurring aural motif of barking dogs in the background.

Meanwhile, Magda's situation continues to worsen, and Sandro's relatives come looking for Valerio. (Inexplicably, although the affair is supposedly secret, they come looking for him at Clara's house.) Not only is Magda now agonizing, dying, but Sandro has been fired, evicted, and now threatens to kill Gorzone. Valerio tries to intervene on Sandro's behalf, but Gorzone ultimately responds with words that seem to echo Valerio's about the rape victim: "What's done is done." But when Mme Valerio announces her return, and thus threatens the end of the affair between Valerio and Clara, paradoxically it is Valerio who proposes to leave for Nice and continue the affair there. The scenario of a threat to his romantic interest in Clara brings to the surface the contrast between apparent duty and real desire, as Valerio seems ready to leave everything for Clara.

Finally evicted, Sandro and his family go across town to a relative's house in a wagon full up with their few belongings and a crate full of chickens. A chance bump makes the crate fall off the cart, and the chickens are soon freed and causing a slight commotion in the middle of a town carnival. A few townspeople chase the chickens, catch them, and, in one instance, beat one up with a stick, in a shot nearly identical to Pedro's in *Los olvidados*. In *El bruto* as well, the death of the title character is accompanied by the vision of a strange rooster staring into a woman's face. Chickens, Buñuel wrote, were the topic of his nightmares (de la Colina and Pérez Turrent, 1993: 99), and so they are for Sandro: as the chickens are gathered and returned, Sandro comes to the wagon to discover that Magda has died in the transit across town. And while Valerio wonders if, had he been available, he might have been able to intercede on behalf of Sandro and Magda, Sandro wanders about town disconsolately, eventually arriving at Gorzone's house, with a gun in hand. Like Gorzone staring at the lovely nurse before him, Sandro first sees Gorzone through a window. The object of violent desire is as often as not in Buñuel's films seen through the glass or grates of a window, placing it, even if symbolically, out of reach, as Pedro does in *Los olvidados* and Mathieu in *Cet obscure objet du désir*. A party is in progress at Gorzone's house, thus the cruelty of the contrast between the two men is especially dramatic, almost melodramatic: opulence, (apparent) happiness, a carefree, joyous context that Sandro has never known. Again without provocation, as in the opening sequence, and in several arbitrary moments in the course of the movie, a kitten comes up to play around Sandro's feet. Sandro picks up the kitten and holds it in his hand, in a gesture identical to one of Valerio's, earlier that day at Magda's funeral. He comes into the house, kitten in one hand, gun in the other, and in spite of the protests of a priest and a supervisor, he shoots Gorzone three times, in front of everyone. Even in agony, Gorzone is cruel, calling, at the moment of death, the name of the young nurse from earlier in the movie.

The beginning of the third act finds Sandro seeking refuge in Valerio's house. Even facing the suspicions of Inspector Fasaro, Valerio and Clara hide Sandro in the doctor's house, and make plans to get him safely to the Continent. Hiding in an unused room, Sandro wanders why Valerio agrees to help him. The narrative states that Valerio and Sandro knew each other in the war, and that Valerio had

tended to Sandro's wound after a battle. The relationship between the two men, separated by class, education, and nationality, is sustained by a bond that transcends prejudice, though it ultimately cannot survive desire. Valerio acknowledges that perhaps he could have helped Magda and Sandro, and thus also bears a part of the guilt. Interviewed by Fasaro, Valerio continues to lie. In the scene in Fasaro's office on a wall there appears to be a small copy of Salvador Dalí's painting *The Christ of St John of the Cross* (1951).

Unlike the telegraphic Jesus of the earlier scene, this painting, not shown in close-up or explained, seems less arbitrary. Arguably Valerio can be compared to a flawed Jesus figure (like Nazarín, Viridiana, and Simon) with his early attempts at justice and his selfless though lay service to the poor. The Dalí painting has been seen as subversive, by presenting its subject from above, and not from below as most classical representations of the crucifixion. In any case, its presence in the scene suggests some connection to the plot, in which, either the flawed Valerio, or the sacrificial Sandro, who brings to an end a specific reign of injustice, can be seen as humanizations of the Christ figure. Inspector Fasaro brings to mind Valerio's weaknesses: he teases Valerio about the widow Clara Bernardi, and hints that the doctor should give up the fugitive.

The arrival of Mme Valerio and her father (Henri Nassiet) threatens Valerio's attempt to save Sandro from the authorities. Valerio now understands that Gorzone's murder is not a crime. In a gesture of rebelliousness against the imposing father-in-law, with whom he continuously clashes, Valerio admits to having Sandro in the house, taking advantage of the chance to be rid of the wife and the father-in-law's grip. Whether his act is one of bravery and justice or one of opportunity is not clear, since Clara continues to be Valerio's main motivation, and his morality and resolve have already been tested in the conflict between duty and desire. Surely tipped off by the father-in-law, Inspector Fasaro and the *carabinieri* (the Italian national police), arrive at Valerio's house to search for Sandro. Paradoxically, Sandro has already escaped and thus saved Valerio from accusations of complicity. Once again, Valerio's attempts to do good for Sandro are futile, and it is Sandro who comes across as the truly noble character. While Sandro is hiding in the (prophetic) "Rue Obscure," Valerio tries to convince him to surrender, but Sandro kills himself with the same World War II pistol with which he had shot Gorzone. Valerio finally holds Sandro's dead body in a heretical pietà that, for the third time in the movie, suggests a Christ-like allusion to religious art in a profane manner. Upset, but paradoxically free of guilt, Valerio is reunited with Clara at the site of Sandro's murder, and the two walk hand in hand by the pier, in the company of some of the workers.

Valerio's moral dilemma is never quite resolved. He feels guilty for neglecting Sandro and Magda, though his gesture of risking his safety and freedom by hiding Sandro can be considered quite heroic. More importantly, Valerio is an outsider, an idealist (as the doomed protagonist of *La Fièvre monte à El Pao*), a secular saint whose heart is in the right place, but who, at the most critical moment, succumbs

to the very real humanity of his own romantic and sexual desires. In the face of injustice, isolation, and an apathetic social structure, it turns out that Valerio is just a man and his social struggle is, like Nazarín's and Viridiana's, doomed to fail.

La Mort en ce jardin

Buñuel continues his exploration of the themes of isolation, the loss of innocence – if there ever was innocence – and the human response to social and/or natural environments in *La Mort en ce jardin*, which directly follows *Cela s'appelle l'aurore* chronologically. Produced in 1956, *La Mort en ce jardin* is one of the many films in which Buñuel was associated with producer Óscar Dancigers, who was an instrumental partner in Buñuel's Mexican years, and importantly, the producer who, after the rough initiation of *Gran Casino*, aka *En el viejo Tampico* (Magnificent Casino, 1947), and the relative success of *El gran calavera* (The Great Madcap, 1949), gave Buñuel the opportunity – and the freedom – to make *Los olvidados*. Equally important was Dancigers' partnership with Buñuel as well in *Robinson Crusoe*, his first international co-production, his first color film (in Pathé Color) and one that gained considerable attention and success nationally and abroad. In some ways, Buñuel and Dancigers, along with Luis Alcoriza, seemed to have been trying to recreate some of the *Robinson Crusoe* formula in *La Mort en ce jardin*: it is Buñuel's second color film (Eastman Color), and an international co-production. It also features a group of people in exile, Westerners removed from their environments and thrown together in a primal, survival situation, much like Crusoe's. Unlike the Defoe character who succeeds in taming his environment, Buñuel's ultimately succumb to the elements.

Though Buñuel was immediately reunited in this movie with Georges Marchal, top billing went to French diva Simone Signoret, and the ubiquitous French character actor Charles Vanel (of Clouzot's *Les Diaboliques* and Hitchcock's *To Catch a Thief*, both 1955 among many others). Also in this film Buñuel worked for the first time with Michel Piccoli, with whom he would continue to work periodically, from *Le Journal d'une femme de chambre* to *Belle de jour*, *Le Charme discret de la Bourgeoisie* (The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie, 1972), and *Cet obscur objet du désir*. With three credited screenwriters, among them Buñuel and Alcoriza (and an uncredited Gabriel Arout), *La Mort en ce jardin* was a film in which Buñuel admitted having many problems of plot and structure. This film, he wrote in *Mon dernier soupir*, "I just couldn't get right" (Buñuel and Carrière, 1983: 214). Yet, as *Cela s'appelle l'aurore* before it, it emerges as a classically structured narrative, with a well-defined group of characters, and a typical "quest" structure. The setting is 1945 in a vaguely identified Latin American country, in a diamond-mining post near the Brazilian border. The diamond mining setting is quite unusual for Latin America: some diamond deposits were exploited in Brazil and Paraguay in the

nineteenth century, but diamond activity is quite rare. Diamonds and other jewelry come to represent the dreams and desires of several of the characters in the movie; dreams and desires that are as out of place in this narrative as the diamond mines are in Latin America.

The political plot of *La Mort en ce jardin* is precisely set into motion by the intervention of the government in the mining activities: in the movie's first scene, by decree, the diamond mines are nationalized, to the outrage of the miners. This plot detail of nationalization is quite telling in the context of Mexico's nationalization of the oil industry in 1938, which Buñuel had previously referenced in his *Subida al cielo* (Ascent to Heaven, aka Mexican Bus Ride, 1951) (Acevedo-Muñoz, 2003: 114). The reactionary decree sets the stage for a confrontation between government, military, and workers. In the early scenes of the movie, the indication seems to be that the narrative will revolve around the miners' rebellion, but the introduction of "Chark" (Georges Marchal) eventually derails that narrative false lead. Chark arrives pulling a horse through the middle of a confrontation between soldiers and miners, paying no attention to these events: clearly an outsider with no particular political position. When asked to "halt" by a captain, Chark flips them his middle finger and continues on his way. The profane gesture, quite rare for Buñuel, clearly characterizes Chark as a person outside of politics, society, and morality. Surprisingly, the stranger (drifter? mercenary?) is left alone by the soldiers.

Later, at the local cantina, Chark is uninterested in the plotting miners. But he shows interest in the lovely young mute girl who, in a typically Buñuelian motif, is introduced from the knees down, trying on a new pair of boots. Cruelly teasing the girl about her muteness, Chark is confronted by her father, Castin (Charles Vanel), an old miner in his late sixties who dreams of returning to Marseilles and opening a restaurant. But Chark violently threatens the gentle Castin: a clear contrast between these two men that, over the course of the movie is reversed. Referring to his parenting duties toward the young mute, Chark says, "family men should not act so brave." While Chark's intentions toward the young Maria Castin (Michèle Girardon) are not clear, she is however characterized as quite naive, pre-sexual, and thus, in potential danger of the seemingly amoral character with the suspiciously predatory name.

While the miners plot to get armed and fight the government and the soldiers, the new local priest, Fr. Lizardi (Michel Piccoli), tries to persuade them to not resist with a prophetic, if anti-surrealist argument: "Revolt always ends in merciless repression …" The only one who will listen to the priest's counsel is the gentle, pious Castin, "a peaceful man" who agrees not to get involved. Buñuel is establishing here a triangle of moral positions: one socially detached (Chark), one cautiously rational (Fr. Lizardi), and one agreeably saintly (Castin). These moral positions are all tested over the course of the movie; as in *Cela s'appelle l'aurore*, and later *El ángel exterminador* (The Exterminating Angel, 1962), there are no moral or social boundaries that, given the proper circumstances, cannot come apart.

After the brief confrontation, and clearly uninterested in the town's social unrest, in search of a bed to spend the night Chark is directed to the bordello run by the mysterious "Mme Djin." Finding no answer at the door, Chark comes in and helps himself to a big, brass bed: once again we find the Buñuelian motif of this incongruous sign of misplaced luxury in the unlikeliest settings, in this case the shabby bedroom at Mme Djin's. A cat comes into the room while Chark gets ready for the bed no one has offered him, and Chark unceremoniously throws a boot at the animal. The scene recreates the bed, animal, and shoes motif that we saw, also featuring Georges Marchal, in *Cela s'appelle l'aurore*. And as in that film's tortoise scene, here it fades to black as Chark comfortably gets into bed. After an indeterminate ellipsis the scene fades back in to reveal Djin (Simone Signoret) in bed, next to Chark, staring at him. The setting of the couple in bed is common to Buñuel, of course, but quite repetitive in these three films, as we saw in *Cela s'appelle l'aurore* and will see in *La Fièvre monte à El Pao*. The "couple-in-bed" scene in these movies seems to be indicative of power relations: Djin quickly identifies herself as the dominant partner, explaining her business to Chark ("I'm a professional") and demanding to be paid for the bed, and her self. When Chark shows her a leather wallet strapped around his chest the sexual transaction is agreed upon, but Buñuel fades the scene out before we even see them kiss.

Soon after the sexual encounter, Djin turns Chark over to the soldiers, and shares the wallet money with the captain. In this scene Djin is last seen sewing the lace on a negligee, in a pose reminiscent of Vermeer's *The Seamstress*, seen briefly in *Un chien andalou*, and repeated years later in *Cet obscur objet du désir*. In those films the pose is suggestive of sexual activity before the man attacks the young woman, and after Mathieu has finally possessed his obscure object. But in *La Mort en ce jardin* the tables are turned, and it is the woman who is characterized as dominant.

Arrested and accused of a robbery in a nearby town, en route to the jail Chark is inexplicably brought to church. While Fr. Lizardi celebrates mass, assisted by Castin, Maria, Castin's daughter, piously prays. While the church detour goes unexplained, the scene brings Chark and Maria Castin together again: she looks at him kindly, suggesting some empathy between the amoral stranger and the innocent Maria. After an unprovoked skirmish in the church, the soldiers bring Chark to the headquarters and accuse him of the robbery. Chark is identified by "Chenco" (Tito Junco) as one of the robbers. Chenco, a trader who owns a boat and who has just delivered three fresh prostitutes to town, is given a share of Chark's money.

Buñuel later juxtaposes the miners' revolt, in which they kill a soldier, with Maria and Castin's loving, tender relationship. Castin announces to Maria his plans to return to Marseilles and open a restaurant, and his intention of taking Djin with him and making her his wife. Though there is no narrative explanation for Castin's desire of Djin, it is suggested that he is a client who has fallen in love with the prostitute. But Djin is shown to be self-serving, calculating, and only interested in business. Appalled and amused by Castin's intentions, of which one of the miners has informed her, Djin only shows interest when reminded that Castin is old and

rich. "You will soon be a young, rich widow," says the messenger. The contrast between Maria's innocence, Castin's misplaced desire, and Djin's conniving attitude are juxtaposed to Fr. Lizardi's sincere, if futile exercise of his priestly duties. Brought to the jail to tend to a wounded miner accused of murdering a soldier during the revolt, Fr. Lizardi meets Chark at the jail, who is sharing the cell. When the wounded miner strenuously – and heretically – refuses confession and absolution, Chark intervenes, pretending to convince the miner, sentenced to death, to accept the priest's offer. The obstinate miner refuses, but Chark takes the opportunity, in a falsely pious gesture, to ask to be allowed to write a letter to his mother. Fr. Lizardi agrees and procures a fountain pen from the guards. In the most comical scene in the movie, Chark uses the pen to stab one soldier in the eye, throws the bottle of ink to another soldier, and escapes, leaving Fr. Lizardi and the soldiers locked in the jail. What in another movie would pass as comedy, the absurd escape from jail, is in fact the turning point in this film. Chark is freed in a most unheroic manner, setting the stage for the second act, and the presumably Buñuelian plot of the escape to the jungle. Furthermore, not only is the priest's sacred duty rejected, but he is also the vehicle for the criminal's escape. Ineffectual and unwittingly complicit, like so many other religious figures in the Buñuel canon, Fr. Lizardi is seen as ignorant of human instincts and Chark's deceptive nature.

Later that night the battalion prepares to execute the wounded, unconscious prisoner. The scene is quite reminiscent of the parallel children-at-play scene in *Cela s'appelle l'aurore* where the boys are seen staging a mock execution, though in *La Mort en ce jardin* it is, however unjust, contextually justified. The execution leads to the open revolt of the miners. The ensuing battle sequence is unique in Luis Buñuel's films. While there are many violent scenes, and gun confrontations are abundant in Buñuel's films, the moody nighttime cinematography, considerable violence, and spectacular gunfire (complete with machine guns, canon fire, and a grand explosion) is unlike anything seen in his films, even the short battle sequence near the beginning of *Le Fantôme de la liberté*. Taking advantage of the confusion, Castin, who is not involved in the revolt, seeks refuge in Djin's house. The next morning, hundreds more soldiers arrive in the town and declare martial law. Inexplicably, Castin and Chark, disapprovingly called "foreigners" – as if the violence came from without – are accused of provoking the revolt, now effectively suppressed. A reward of 5000 pesos is offered, and orders are given to execute Castin's and Chark's (unnamed) associates if the two do not turn themselves in. After Fr. Lizardi finds Castin at Djin's, he naturally tries to convince Castin to surrender. But the threat starts to bring Castin's feelings and fears to the surface: he refuses to turn himself in. In a clear instance of arbitrary violence and prejudice, villagers break into Djin's house, in search of the fugitives. After searching Djin's house they find Fr. Lizardi hiding in the bedroom: assuming a sexual assignation has occurred, the townspeople leave, amused, accusing Fr. Lizardi of violating his vows. Two righteous men, Castin and Lizardi, find themselves unwittingly aligned with the amoral hustler, Chark, and the gold-digging prostitute, Djin. Politics,

prejudice, violence, and chance, the favorite surrealist topic, bring them together. Always the opportunist, Djin seizes the chance to appeal to Castin's weaknesses: he offers her his diamond fortune (held in a fist-sized leather bag) if she will help him and Maria escape to Brazil.

Finally, Castin, Maria, Djin, Fr. Lizardi (now disgraced), and a stowaway Chark, at gunpoint, escape in Chenco's boat. Even Castin, knocking out Chenco, has now a hand in the violence, as the moral lines start to quickly overlap among the four principals. In a moment of retribution and warning, without provocation, Chark beats Djin unconscious as the boat sails away. Even Fr. Lizardi, continuously trying to do the right thing, becomes angry and nearly violent at Chark's incitement and accusations. Only Maria Castin, so far the ultimate angelic figure, remains unsoiled by the violence and fears rising around her. Chased by a patrol boat the group disembarks, and finally we arrive at the presumed Buñuelian plot of the movie: the "lord of the flies" scenario of the effects of isolation, hunger, exposure, desire, and desperation on this incompatible alliance. Battling the elements, storms, and nighttime fears, they find refuge in a cave. Soon after settling, Djin is cruel with Castin, returning his diamonds, mocking his dreams of a married life in Marseilles, insulting the priest and, without provocation, slapping the young Maria. Djin is once again beaten into submission by Chark, to whose violence she seems to respond. Guided by Chenco, the soldiers are hot on their trail and sure that "the jungle will eat them alive." The omen seems real when Maria's hair is caught in some bushes in a poetic and absurd scene that offers a literalization of the metaphor. Assuredly, little by little, the jungle and the elements take over in a battle of civilization vs. wilderness, where moments of kindness can still be glimpsed: in the middle of a hard night rain, Chark protects Maria with his hat, but not Djin. Still uncorrupted, Maria Castin is kind, even to Djin, massaging her feet with yucca leaves. But her father, always the weakest, soon begins to show signs of insanity, slowly deteriorating into irrationality.

Even Fr. Lizardi the next morning is seen without his black shirt and clerical collar, he too becoming an ordinary man. Like Nazarín and Viridiana, Fr. Lizardi's ordinary humanity emerges from the external signs of his religious facade. Looking more like an explorer than a priest, secularized at least in appearance, he wields a machete, hat, and khakis, as they continue to break their way through the jungle. It is Fr. Lizardi who first sees a large boa constrictor on a low tree branch. The "de-saintification" of Fr. Lizardi seems complete with the edenic implications of the snake, and his coming in contact with the animal traditionally identified with the human "fall from grace" in Genesis, 3. Chark quickly kills the snake with a few machete blows and skins it for food. As they have difficulty starting a fire Fr. Lizardi, thinking more practically than piously, rips off a page from the preliminary section of his Bible to use as combustible. When the fire is started without the help of the paper, Fr. Lizardi carefully tucks it back where it belongs. Though it looks like a potentially sacrilegious act, Fr. Lizardi is being practical: thinking as a layman and not as a priest, and ultimately he restores the page to its

proper place. However, they'll never get to eat the snake: before it goes to the fire a shot shows a million red ants dragging the skin and meat away into the jungle. It is a primal, biblical, apocalyptic, iconic image that relentlessly underscores the helplessness, the careless hubris of humans in this environment even momentarily thinking that they can dominate it.

By shocking contrast, Buñuel fades from the shot of the snake to a lively scene of the Champs Élysées at night, the Arc de Triomphe in the background, traffic incongruously heard in the soundtrack. As surrealist an image as the film ever conveys, it is in fact, the representation of a dream, of Castin's ultimate desire, as the shot cuts to a still postcard of approximately the same scene, in Castin's hand, being tossed into the fire. Like the postcard scene in *Le Fantôme de la liberté*, this one is out of context, meaningless, the representation of an abandoned dream. Buñuel follows this scene, not coincidentally, with Fr. Lizardi, seemingly delirious, in a complete non sequitur, telling the story of a young, plump seminarian who ate more than his share of soft-boiled eggs in the abbey on certain mornings. Thus, all the transformations are complete: even Fr. Lizardi longingly thinks of the simple earthly delights now denied to him.

When desperation finally threatens to devolve the characters into their most primal state, down to digging up and eating roots, Chark makes the fantastic find of an airplane wreck nearby. Miraculously, they find themselves surrounded by canned food, cured hams, exotic cheeses, bottles of wine, clothes, soap, jewelry, weapons, and all they may desire. The "oasis" sequence, triggered by chance, grants them the opportunity to be restored to some form of humanity. When, becoming of his state, Fr. Lizardi offers his thanks to God, Djin offers hers to Chark. It is Chark who points out the paradox of this salvation: "fifty people had to die to save us." Naturally the restoration brings up other human passions. Djin and Chark presumably rekindle their sexual affair and the heretofore unspoiled Maria Castin becomes greedy and tries to take jewelry found in the wreckage: vanity and desire emerge in the most humble character. Maria even seems ready to substitute Chark for the increasingly mentally unstable Castin. In an adoption that seems like a seduction, Chark questions her: "Wouldn't you like to have a father like me? I like you very much, you know?"

Overcome by madness, Castin tosses the diamonds in the lake and heretically prophesizes about their destiny: "God has cursed us … Soon, God's justice will be known!" Now that salvation seems at hand with Brazil visible at the other shore, Djin and Chark, again their true selves, are seemingly aligned. Having helped themselves to the jewels confiscated from Maria by Fr. Lizardi, they agree to escape together: "You and I are the same," says Djin with a complicit gesture. Clean, made-up, and bejeweled in the jungle setting, this Djin is a truly surrealist sight, more dream than reality (Figure 16.3).

It is not quite the dream of Chark, however, who refuses to leave Maria behind. Finally overtaken by insanity and wild jealousy, Castin shoots Djin dead with a hunting rifle from the wreckage. Fr. Lizardi, restored to his priestly image, tries to



Figure 16.3 Djin and Chark in the jungle, but surrealistically dressed for a night at the opera in *La mort en ce jardin*. Dismages, Producciones Tepeyac.

reason with Castin. "In God's name, I beg you!" are the priest's last prayers before succumbing to the rifle. In spite of Maria's pleading, yet hesitantly in self-defense, Chark shoots Castin dead, before the two embark to Brazil across the lake, in a found raft. The ending however, does not offer any resolution: the hustler and criminal, and the young, beautiful, deaf-mute, virginal ingénue are cruelly mismatched in life experience, expectations, and knowledge. Maria's virtue will soon fall prey to Chark's desires. Maria's transformation from girl to woman, from saint to whore, already promised with her show of vanity around the jewels, is finally manifested. Once confronted with the temptations of desire, even for Maria Castin, there is no such thing as innocence.

La Fièvre monte à El Pao

Made immediately after the production and considerable critical success of *Nazarín*, *La Fièvre monte à El Pao* sets Buñuel into yet another political plot, and his only collaboration with the Mexican diva María Félix, the *grande dame* of Mexican melodrama in the 1940s. Once again, structural and narrative problems brought on board six screenwriters, Buñuel and Alcoriza among them, in this final collaboration with Dancigers, one of the producers (Monegal, 1993: 236). Back to black and white, after the Eastman Color experiment of *La Mort en ce jardin*, Buñuel returned to his recurring director of photography Gabriel

Figueroa, who had shot for him several movies in the 1950s, from *Los olvidados* to *Nazarín*. The movie is set again in a fictional, troubled Latin American country, in this case the "Caribbean" island of the Republic of Ojeda, and, though spoken in French, the setting is established as a former Spanish colony. A voice-over narrator, in a monotone similar to that in *Las Hurdes*, gives us the vital facts, in an introduction that would otherwise serve as tourist advertising, except for the interest in social and economic unrest. "No tourists are allowed here," says the narrator, while the camera shows expansive slums, followed by information about prisons, political repression, and violence. The early insistence on the political context of the movie is deceptive; ultimately the plot turns melodramatic, and its focus, as in *Cela s'appelle l'aurore* and *Nazarín*, turns to a man torn between duty and morality.

The contrast between poverty, political repression, and opulence is established with the introduction of María Félix as "Señora Vargas," the governor's wife, in the arms of another man. The unfaithful younger wife of the governor soon claims the attention of the "idealist" young secretary Vázquez (Gérard Philipe), who has been assigned to escort her, and indeed she will be the cause of Vázquez's moral dilemma. The governor already suspects his wife to be having an affair with Vázquez, who protests his innocence. Buñuel sets up the political plot and the romantic triangle scenario with a confrontation between the governor and his wife in his office, witnessed by Vázquez, while peasants and soldiers outside prepare for the celebration of the national independence. Like Djin in *Cela s'appelle l'aurore* and Conchita in *Cet obscur objet du désir*, Inés Vargas cruelly expresses her disgust for her husband. Colonel Vargas, sweaty, disheveled, beats her up with cries of "slut" and "bitch," and attempts to rape her. Vázquez intervenes, trying to take the colonel to the festivities in the plaza. Quizzed by Inés about the cause of his chivalry, Vázquez confesses to be in love with her. But the reasons for the idealist to be in love with this woman, already marked as selfish, unfaithful, even cruel, is never satisfactorily explained.

The juxtaposition of the private violence and the public festival is quite eloquent: empty propaganda speeches are delivered while the peasants wait around, tired and hungry, for meat to be distributed as a bribe for their presence. When an assassin's bullet ends Governor Vargas's speech, the peasants riot and try to take over the meat trucks. As in *La ilusión viaja en tranvía* (Illusion Travels by Streetcar, 1953) the big slabs of raw meat in the middle of the plaza have a comically uncanny presence. They remind us, however, of the primal need for nourishment, a great irony contrasting the demagogue's speech with the empty stomachs of the peasants who, like Pedro in *Los olvidados*, can only dream of meat. Buñuel emphasizes this contrast further with the introduction of President Barreiro (Andrés Soler). Part Trujillo, part Franco, a former revolutionary turned dictator, he is unconcerned with the unrest in the distant port town, showing off his magnificent racing horses in the faraway capital, El Pao. "Freedom would make them poor again," says Barreiro when informed of the assassination. As a political figure President

Barreiro is a rare presence in Buñuel's *oeuvre*. However, the old, repressive patriarch does recur in many guises in *El bruto*, *Viridiana*, *Tristana*, and *Cet obscur objet du désir*, always as a symbol of retrograde ideas and values. Barreiro is surrounded by an impressive security apparatus, headed by "Alejandro Gual" (Jean Servais), who quickly orders the arrest of several dissidents and political figures accused in the assassination plot.

Paradoxically, the humanitarian Vázquez, the son of French immigrants, now interim governor, is part of the repressive regime. When new prisoners are brought to a fort, Vázquez protests that political detainees are not supposed to be chained (they are introduced with a typically Buñuelian shot of their feet marching in chains). He orders them unchained, and recognizes among them his old law professor, Mr Cárdenas (Domingo Soler). Professor Cárdenas scolds Vázquez's participation in the repression, saying, "I did not expect to see you become a jailer." Embarrassed, Vázquez promises that they will be treated fairly. The Cárdenas name, of course, is historically charged in Mexico, as it calls to mind Lázaro Cárdenas' presidency and its social and political initiatives, so the reference is too provocative.[1] Professor "Cárdenas" in this movie then, suggests the move from revolution to crisis and demagogy that President Barreiro hints at in his first scene, and the betrayal of revolutionary ideals. During the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939) Cárdenas supported the Republican side, and thousands of Spanish exiles, among them many artists and intellectuals, came to Mexico because Cárdenas eased immigration and safe passage (Halperín Donghi, 1993: 234–237). Though Buñuel came in 1946, he seems to make a circuitous reference to "Cárdenas" as an inspirational figure for the young Vázquez, however conflicted he might be.

Inés, who witnesses the exchange between Vázquez and the prisoner, acts, moved by his "idealism": she wants to be useful in improving the island's social and political situation. The reasons for her conversion, however, appear to be personal as it seems Vázquez might be useful to her. In fact, the most ambiguous transformation in the movie is that of Inés, whose motives go from political to personal to romantic in her relationships with the two male principals, Vázquez and Gual. Soon after she appeals to his humanitarian side, the affair begins between Vázquez and Inés. Even while trying to improve the conditions of political prisoners, Vázquez enjoys the privileges of his affair with the widow. Like Valerio before him in *Cela s'appelle l'aurore*, Vázquez's major conflict will bring him to debate between social duty and sexual desire. Inés is suddenly transformed into a caring, loving woman, in great contrast with her earlier characterization around the husband and previous lover. But when Gual attempts to blackmail her into an affair, she resists sincerely. The duality of this woman is comparable to Séverine in *Belle de jour* and Conchita in *Cet Obscure objet du désir*, whose motives are neither revealed nor understood by the men around them.

Gual's approach soon shifts to Vázquez, insinuating an affair with Inés to torture Vázquez. "We are all in love with her," he says, and suggests the assassination may

have been triggered by passion, not politics. The political plot continues to intersect the romantic one: promoted to chief of security, Vázquez continues to be kind to the prisoners, but when a skirmish erupts in the prison, he steps aside, allowing the security apparatus to tighten up repression and punishments. In bed with Inés – like Valerio and Chark before him – Vázquez is disarmed by the woman, and confesses his political impotence: "There's nothing I could do," he says. The pressure from Gual continues when, after the assassin is captured and murdered by soldiers, Gual produces a handy but false confession implicating Vázquez. With this "evidence" of a crime of passion, Gual succeeds in sexually blackmailing Inés: she will yield to his desires or Vázquez will be arrested and executed. The scene between Gual and Inés is recognizably Buñuelian, in a movie mostly devoid of humor and passion. Buñuel's fetishistic shot of bare breasts, legs, and shoes, accompanies Gual's cruel humiliation of Inés. "This is how I wanted to see you, submissive, pleasing … Get dressed, I've changed my mind," he says dismissing her.

Now firmly in Gual's grip, Inés and Vázquez must find an opportunity to free themselves and take action against Gual. When Professor Cárdenas informs Vázquez of an upcoming prisoners' mutiny, it is Inés who sees it as an opportunity. If Vázquez lets the mutiny go ahead as planned, it will reflect negatively on Gual's control, and he may be brought down. But Vázquez, always the "idealist," resists her suggestion, to avoid more repression against the political prisoners. Thus, the romantic and political plots are finally merged, and while Vázquez debates about the next action, Inés must go forward with the Gual affair. Vázquez is ineffectual as a political figure – unable to effect any real change – and as a romantic lead, reluctant to defend his lover from sexual blackmail. During a sexual assignation between Gual and Inés, she produces a gun and tries to kill him. A violent confrontation ensues in which she bites Gual while he tackles her strongly, calling her *"salope"* (slut, or bitch), as did her husband before. To this, paradoxically she responds: her face turns from angry grimace to seductive smile and she kisses him passionately. Buñuel compares the affair with bullfighting. Now involved, we next see Gual and Inés at the bullfights. They are both confrontational and seductive, like the *lidia* (bullfight) itself, and Buñuel juxtaposes the shots of the two at their box with inept stock footage of a bullfight. While they kiss, the matador gets gored in a sarcastic image that is charged with Buñuelian irony; not only is their kiss substituted with the violent shots of the bull dragging the toreador around the arena, but they missed it. The scene also offers a "kiss of death" scenario since after the kiss (and gore) Gual is promptly arrested for failing to stop the prisoners' mutiny, which has begun. Once again, Vázquez is inexplicably promoted – to "general delegate" of the province – and is in charge of ending the mutiny. After getting news of the death of professor Cárdenas during the mutiny, Vázquez vows, once again, to try to do the right thing. He pleads with the mutinous prisoners to surrender, lest the army take over.

The third act begins with a final interview between Inés and Gual, now in jail, awaiting execution. "You won," says the cunning Gual, "what a shame, we were

made for each other." After Gual is executed (off camera) the mutiny comes to an end, but Vázquez continues to be conflicted about the execution. Promoted by the President to provincial governor, Vázquez's political transformation is now complete: from "idealist" and judicious, he is now an integral part of the repressive, murderous regime. Yet, his moral struggle continues: asked to get Inés's signature on a confession that she knew about Gual's participation in another anti-government plot, Vázquez refuses. Yet, he brings the "confession" to Inés. But Vázquez wants to be the dreamer again; as governor he will try to implement "Cárdenas's ideals." This transparent political message, unique in Buñuel's career, is justified only by the profound sense of irony: Vázquez has already failed in politics, in romance, and in ideology. The only thing left to him is pride.

Finally, Vázquez faces an ultimatum from Inés: she will sign the confession if they go into exile together. But when Vázquez allows the confession to go through, Inés accuses him, correctly, of being just like Gual. Again humiliated, Inés gets ready to leave for Mexico and expects Vázquez to join her there in a few weeks. En route to the airstrip, failing to stop at a checkpoint, Inés is shot dead by soldiers. Disturbed by the news, Vázquez observes a new group of political prisoners being brought to the fortress, all in chains. He orders they be unchained, knowing – says the narrator – that the military will quickly have him arrested for treason and executed. With that final gesture, Vázquez aims for some sort of redemption. There is, however, no sympathy left for Vázquez's moral conundrum: the narrative never delves into his own moral conflict. He remains passive, indifferent, depressed, much like the movie itself. Coincidentally, Buñuel agreed. In his interviews with José de la Colina and Tomás Pérez Turrent, Buñuel had said that the movie showed his "disinterest" (1993: 152).

Conclusion

These films feature three geographically isolated settings and characters that are foreigners, exiled, detached from their origins, and immersed in worlds and situations that they cannot escape, control, or understand. They struggle to find their place and end up defeated, hopeless, or complacent. Like Buñuel's own relationship with Mexican cinema, these French co-productions mark a transitional phase in which he rehearsed partnerships with independent producers in search of better infrastructure and conditions of production. Potentially allegorical like *Robinson Crusoe*, *Cela s'appelle l'aurore*, *La Mort en ce jardin*, and *La Fièvre monte à El Pao* show what 1960s Buñuel scholar Carlos Rebolledo called a "degradation of the thematic" that had occupied Buñuel in the films that surround these, especially *Nazarín* and *Viridiana* (1964: 95–98). These are Buñuel's "message" movies, his *films à thèse*, films with uncharacteristically overt political content and social commentary. In referring to *Cela s'appelle l'aurore* Buñuel summarized its content as "love yes, police no"

(de la Colina and Pérez Turrent, 1993: 132). About *La Mort en ce jardin* he said it was "an anarchist film" (de la Colina and Pérez Turrent, 1993: 138), and admitted it could be seen as a political metaphor. About *La Fièvre monte à El Pao* Buñuel said he did not have any good memories, and that he had done it because at that time he was accepting everything they offered him, "as long as it was not undignified," because he needed the money. Yet, he admitted the film could be interpreted as a political fable (de la Colina and Pérez Turrent, 1993: 152).

As experiments in European modes of production, as metaphors of exile, or as political parables, these films come across as contradictions and generally ill fitting in Buñuel's canon. Structurally conventional and narratively ordinary, they still offer glimpses of the characteristically Buñuelian moments and images that scholars so like to list. But their political content makes them authorial oddities struggling to find their place in Buñuel's universe. Paradoxically, Buñuel's search for the stability and professionalism he expected to find in his second French



Figure 16.4 Luis Buñuel directing Lucía Bosè on location during production of *Cela s'appelle l'aurore*. Notice the note identifying Bosè as "the wife of Luis Miguel" yet making no mention of Buñuel. Courtesy of the Filmoteca Española.

period seems unsuccessful, in contrast to the accomplishments of many of his Mexican films of the 1950s. *Los olvidados*, *Él*, *Ensayo de un crimen*, and *Nazarín* are universally acknowledged among Buñuel's most important films, yet the French triptych remains largely negligible, even in Buñuel's own estimation. Surprisingly, in his search for the creative independence that the Mexican film industry did not afford him, it was Buñuel's association in Mexico with Gustavo Alatriste and Silvia Pinal beginning in 1960 that brought the end of this transitional era. With *Viridiana* and *El ángel exterminador*, which Buñuel produced consecutively with Pinal and Alatriste, began Buñuel's final *"age d'or,"* the period from 1961 to 1977 in which he produced ten films, all deemed canonical by critics and scholars. The traps he encountered with *Cela s'appelle l'aurore*, *La Mort en ce jardin*, and *La Fièvre monte à El Pao* suggest that the problems with these films had less to do with national or international cinemas, and more with the material, the themes, and the weight of "stars" like Simone Signoret and María Félix (Figure 16.4). Eventually, it was by associating with a Mexican producer, and by returning to Spain, that Buñuel was able to realize the vision that his second French period, exemplified by these three movies, only promised, rehearsed, but never delivered.

Note

1 Lázaro Cárdenas was president of Mexico from 1934 to 1940, and spearheaded land and education reform, and the nationalization of the oil industry in 1938. As such, he is seen as a symbol of the early success of the Mexican Revolution in social reform, while Miguel Alemán (1947–1952) was seen as having presided over a period of crisis.

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17

Buñuel Goes Medieval

From Sewing to Cervantes and the *Vagina Dentata*

Sherry Velasco

Tres cosas son que nunca se hartan, la boca del infierno, la vulva, el fuego.
[There are three things that are never satiated: the mouth of hell, the vulva, and fire.]
(Dr Francisco Núñez de Coria,
Aviso de sanidad que trata de todos los géneros de alimentos, 1572)

That Buñuel was inspired by medieval and early modern literature and culture is no surprise to those familiar with his life and work. Many if not most of his films (and autobiographical anecdotes) are imbued with stories and images that have traces to medieval saints and heretics, picaresque characters or itineraries, quixotic endeavors and madness, as well as the Golden Age honor plays and other narratives that explore the impact of chastity and fidelity on social, religious, economic, and psychological conditions.[1]

Critics have noted, and Buñuel himself has recognized, the indelible mark of Spain's premodern tradition on the famous director's cinematic vision.[2] What critics have not considered is whether and how Buñuel's own remarkable body of work might help us rethink Spain's literary heritage. Given the ubiquitous echoes of this heritage on Buñuel's cinematic *oeuvre*, it bears asking whether a closer reading of Buñuel's films might enlighten and energize our reading of canonical and lesser known medieval and Golden Age texts. Revisiting the impact of medieval conventions such as the *restitutio virginitatis* (hymen mending) or other variations of genital mutilation after considering scenes from Buñuel's films *Él* (This Strange Passion, 1952) and *Cet obscur objet du désir* (That Obscure Object of Desire, 1977) and these films' obsessive interest in sewn-up female genitals, I have arrived at a more multi-focal understanding of the social, religious, and economic enterprises

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invested in both prohibiting and promoting these female-phobic practices during the late Middle Ages and early modern period.

The best known medieval literary mender of hymens is the old bawd Celestina from Fernando de Rojas' early modern bestseller, *La tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea*, more commonly known as *La Celestina*.[3] As other scholars have noted, Celestina used her sewing school as a cover for her thriving business as go-between, first selling virginal women to the highest bidder and later offering to repair the woman's lost virtue.[4] But Celestina is hardly the only practitioner of this specialized early form of genital surgery. Medieval and early modern texts can boast a good number of genital seamstresses who also used needle and thread to literally and symbolically repair lost virtue, thereby restoring for young women of good families the visible proof of "virginity" on wedding night sheets. Judging from the regularity with which these unofficial genital seamstresses appear in popular texts, theirs was a good, if risky, business. From the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries accounts of the practice of genital repair and the deceptions to which this gynecological practice could contribute were sketched in works such as Rodrigo de Reinosa's late fifteenth-century "Coplas de las comadres" (Songs of the Midwives), Francisco de Quevedo's picaresque novel *El buscón* (The Swindler, 1626), and Cervantes' novellas "El coloquio de los perros" (The Dogs' Colloquy, 1613) and "La tía fingida" (The Pretended Aunt, *c*.1606).[5]

Within Hispanism the scholarship to date on the practice of genital repair in the early modern period speculates that hymen stitching seems to have served the sole purpose of creating the illusion of still-intact virginity – a crucial consideration for a culture obsessed with inheritances and honor. While there is ample proof that this indeed is the case, after studying the treatment of genital mending/mutilation in Buñuel's *Él* and *Cet obscur objet du désir* I propose considering other possible justifications for the practice of hymen mending. In particular, Buñuel's psychoanalytically charged images of vaginal sewing as a signal of male castration anxiety allows us to revisit earlier texts for signs of similar fears. In other words, it may be that in addition to the explanations that go beyond initial socioeconomic accounts usually given to explain the obsession with hymen mending there might lurk enduring and sustained cultural fears of women's sexual prowess and women's potentially castrating effect on men's psychosexual identity and behavior.

Buñuel's *Él* recounts the story of Francisco (Arturo de Córdova), a paranoid and jealous husband who becomes obsessed with the idea that his wife Gloria (Delia Garcés) might be unfaithful. His madness culminates in a violent breakdown and subsequent retreat to a monastery. The scene in which Francisco, overcome by paranoid jealousy, appears prepared to sew up his wife's vagina is variously described by critics as bizarre, horrific, alarming, and memorable.[6] Armed with needle, thread, scissors, razor blade, cotton, rope, and a flask of what might be chloroform, Francisco seems poised to stitch his sleeping wife's vagina, but his efforts are thwarted when she wakes up, and intuiting what he has in mind, breaks into screams. Although less famous than the eye-slicing scene in Buñuel's *Un chien*

andalou (An Andalusian Dog, 1929), the scene I have just described certainly qualifies as one of the most infamous (albeit suggestive) scenes of bodily suturing in all of Mexican cinema. Film historians and critics have pointed out the scene's debt to both the gruesome and climactic conclusion of Marquis de Sade's *Philosophy in the Boudoir* (in which Madame de Mistival's orifices are stitched up against her will) as well as to the theme of honor in seventeenth-century Spanish drama.[7] Previous studies of the film have failed to note, however, that the scene is just as indebted to early modern hymen menders. In a reversal that nevertheless echoes old paranoias – even as it explores new (properly Freudian) ones – Buñuel's Francisco is intent on preventing rather than facilitating future sexual relationships with his wife. The fact that he himself is willing to pay the price of marital celibacy to ensure his wife's sexual fidelity is also in keeping with the extremes men would go to in order to guarantee the purity of bloodlines and family honor. That Francisco is also obsessed with regaining property once owned by his ancestors only confirms his need to ensure his wife's fidelity lest another man's child inherit his family fortune.

Critics have tended to view Francisco's paranoid plan for this radical form of enforced chastity as a sign of castration anxiety and its various manifestations.[8] Not surprisingly, Francisco's extreme sexual frustration is illustrated at other points in the film, as in the scene where he zigzags up the staircase, grabs a carpet rod and begins to beat the banister with it. The use of the long shot and chiaroscuro in this scene clearly creates the illusion of a man masturbating in the shadows. As the rhythm and noise of the beating increase, Francisco's figure becomes smaller as the camera pulls back, suggesting the sexual frustration and simmering violence of the protagonist.

While chastity, infidelity, and the fear of women are certainly at play in Buñuel's references to genital stitching, all of these images are preceded by the male protagonists' paranoid jealousy and obsessive desire. As similar themes of insane jealousy and obsession are recurrent in Cervantes' work, it is not surprising that some scholars have made passing observations linking Buñuel's protagonists to Cervantes' Anselmo and Carrizales in his stories "El curioso impertinente" (The Foolish Curiosity) and "El celoso extremeño" (The Jealous Man from Extremadura) (Cummings, 2004: 83; Lo, 2008: 62, 73).

Like Buñuel's Francisco in *Él*, Cervantes' protagonist Carrizales in "El celoso extremeño" (one of the *Exemplary Stories* published in 1613) is driven by paranoid jealousy, imprisoning his wife Leonora in a high-security house to prevent any possible contact between his virginal bride and other men. The character's extreme measures only serve to pique the curiosity of a young rogue named Loaysa, who eventually penetrates the fortress-house but ultimately fails in his attempt to conquer Leonora. Unlike Buñuel's Francisco, who literally desires to sew up his wife's vagina, Carrizales describes his own unsuccessful attempt to close off access to his wife in terms of weaving the cocoon that would cause his own dishonor and ruin: "I was like the silk-worm, making the house in which I was to die" (2004: 178). Carrizales' concluding statement is consistent with the recurrent images throughout the story that employ

the meticulously described architecture of the house (frequently characterized as a prison, convent, or harem) as a metaphor for Leonora's off-limits body.[9]

Frequently analyzed in conjunction with "El celoso extremeño," Cervantes "Curioso impertinente" (one of the interpolated stories in *Don Quixote* [Part I, chapters 33–35]) explores one husband's paranoid obsession with testing his wife's fidelity. After Anselmo confesses this mania to his best friend Lotario ("I'm wondering if Camila, my wife, is as perfect as I think; and I cannot verify this truth unless I test her in such a way that it proves the purity of her virtue" [2007: 257]), he devises a plan that removes himself from amorous activity while forcing Lotario into performing a "test" seduction of the unsuspecting bride. Predictably, Lotario's feigned attempts to seduce Camila eventually result in real desire for her. After the two enter into an adulterous affair, a misunderstanding forces Camila to take control of the situation by devising a dramatic performance to convince her husband of her fidelity while facilitating the continuation of her romantic tryst with Lotario. With Anselmo spying behind tapestries, Camila dramatizes her "chastity" in a performance that Georgina Dopico Black has described as a symbolic breaking of the hymen. After a compelling account of her feigned innocence, the amateur actress improvises by taking her husband's dagger and stabbing herself, resulting in a superficial wound in need of mending and with enough blood to shock all the spectators. Needless to say, "the chastity that Camila's blood supposedly confirms, in the end, is no more real than the false virginity of the prostitutes whom Celestina sells over and over again" (Dopico Black, 1999: 106).[10] Despite Camila's successful performance, eventually her husband discovers the truth and dies after accepting responsibility for the disaster. Camila also dies upon learning that Lotario had enlisted in the army and perished in battle.

The preoccupation with the sewing or suturing of female genitals evident in early modern texts resurfaces in Buñuel's last film. In *Cet obscur objet du désir* Mathieu/Mateo appears frustrated by his inability to gain access to his flirtatious yet virginal love interest – ironically named Conchita, a common name but one with an obvious reference to "concha," a slang term for female genitals. In one of this film's most remarkable scenes, Mathieu struggles desperately to remove an intricately sutured chastity girdle that resembles flesh sewn together with impenetrable stitching (Figure 17.1). As the story develops, it becomes more and more painfully obvious that what attracts Mathieu to Conchita is her consistent resolve to deny him access to her body through sexual intercourse. Despite a pattern of finding himself forced to contemplate the woman he desires through windows, doors, and grated gates, Mathieu is consistently willing to participate in the titillating yet hopeless dynamic. As Linda Williams observes: "his enthrallment depends upon being locked out" (1981: 195).

The suture theme becomes a common thread running throughout Buñuel's career, enough so that critics like Agustín Sánchez Vidal refer to Buñuel's fascination with sewing and mending as the director's obsession with "an old wound" (1988: 338). Sewing or other needlework is repeatedly linked to women's infidelity



Figure 17.1 Conchita's sutured chastity girdle in *Cet obscur objet du désir*. Greenwich Film Productions, Les Films Galaxie, and In-Cine Compañía Industrial Cinematográfica.

in Buñuel's films, and his female protagonists often are pictured as holding needle and thread in hand when the topic of their sexual betrayal surfaces (Sánchez Vidal, 1988: 338). It is not unexpected, then, that the end of what would be Buñuel's last film depicts a seamstress in a shop window mending a torn and bloodstained lace garment. This scene, one that has received much critical attention, can be seen to open up a dialogue with both the early modern tradition of hymen menders and similar imagery in other Buñuel films, especially his first – *Un chien andalou*. The sharpening of the razor blade prior to the eye-slicing scene in *Un chien andalou* and the razor preparation preceding Francisco's thwarted attempt to sew up his wife's genitals in *Él* suggest the mutilation that would necessitate such bodily stitching.[11] As Ronnie Scharfman points out about the scene in *Cet obscur objet du désir*: "The metaphor here is obvious: the torn hymen of the wedding day" (1980: 357).[12] Reminiscent of the demand for Celestina's services ("she's made and unmade more than five thousand virgins in this city" [Rojas, 2009: 10]), the fact that the lace/hymen must be repaired implies the deception of feigned virginity – perhaps a false promise for the next lover (and/or a previous partner) who believes he would be wedding or deflowering a virgin. Indeed, Conchita's questionable relationship with her guitar-playing accompanist (El Morenito) and her openly sexual behavior (she dances nude for tourists in Seville) belie her claim of chastity.

Critics have focused their attention on the ways in which the final scene in *Cet obscur objet du désir* references Vermeer's painting *The Lacemaker*, a painting which appears in *Un chien andalou*.[13] While the allusion to Vermeer may be the most obvious, connections to the *restitutio virginitatis* tradition appear equally feasible. Consistent with the general assessment of the scene that suggested vagina stitching

in *Él*, Linda Williams' analysis points to a fear of women in Buñuel's first and last films: "The bloodied rent in the gown, like the similar wounds in the eye and hand of *Un chien andalou*, is an obvious metaphor for castration" (1981: 204). Even Buñuel confessed a special affinity for this shot: "I found the final scene very moving – the woman's hand carefully mending a tear in a bloody lace mantilla" (2003: 250).

As some scholars have suggested, Buñuel's evident preoccupation with male castration anxiety frequently translates in his films into images that suggest the *vagina dentata*. Víctor Fuentes argues that the church scenes in *Él* (in the opening close-up shots of the foot-washing ceremony when he first sees Gloria and later during Francisco's climactic paranoid frenzy) are charged with both "symbolic connotations of the maternal womb and the *vagina dentata*" (2000: 93).[14] Paulo Antonio Paranaguá also observes that "the interior shots of the Baroque church give the appearance of a cavern which makes the human figures seem small … like they are emerging from a womb, the maternal uterus: the Church of the Holy Mother" (2001: 107–108), while Marsha Kinder concludes that Francisco "has been totally swallowed by the church" (1993: 312).[15] Despite the church's role in *Él* as an undeniably potent site for sexual anxiety, the protagonist continues to rely on religious spaces as refuge from his fear of secular married life.

At the end of Buñuel's *Él*, a supposedly celibate Francisco, now living in a monastery, observes a visit by Gloria and her present husband Raúl (a man to whom she was engaged prior to meeting Francisco). In the final scene of the film, the visit now over, a lone Francisco zigzags down a path in the monastery garden and the image of his zigzagging walk is projected against the view of a dark hole resembling the opening of the famed tunnel – early cinema's most obvious sexual image and a clear reference to female sexual anatomy. While ancient images from folklore, mythology, and art that depict the snapping mouth of the vagina and female genitals as a trap, ominous cave, or a black hole threatening to swallow up and chew men to pieces abound in Buñuel's films,[16] it is impossible not to see the figure of the solitary man zigzagging down a path against this dark opening as an echo of the famous earlier scene discussed above. As the film ends, the character's impulse – unabated still – to sew his wife's genitals in an attempt to stave off his own anxieties is now projected onto a larger theater (Arias, 2001: 231). Kinder is undoubtedly right to note that Francisco's "zigzag confirms that he is as mad as ever and that his castration fears were justified" (1993: 312), but dwelling on the protagonist's madness obscures the fact that the character's actions (and would-be actions) project a much more generalized male fear. Even if the film were not made in 1950s Mexico – a culture still obsessed by post-revolutionary machismo – the ending of Buñuel's *Él* would be echoing one of the most common psychosexual fantasies of Freudian and post-Freudian age. That the scene is also filled with irony is much to Buñuel's credit, even though it does not exempt the director from sharing in that fantasy.

Neither leading man in Buñuel's *Él* and *Cet obscur objet du désir* recognize their culpability or reveal any transformative insight from their traumatic fearful designs on the women they desire. Before zigzagging off in the distance, Francisco's last

comment is one of self-righteous affirmation: "time has proven my point." Mathieu, on the other hand, appears willing to undergo more amorous torture. Despite all the humiliations suffered at the hand of Conchita, he agrees to go off with her, again. While walking together at the end, she seems to push him away right before a bomb explodes in the final shot. What these four male protagonists do have in common, nonetheless, is an obsessive personality that points to an underlying fear of castration and the ensuing endeavors to protect themselves from the dangers of sexual relations with women.[17]

References to the *vagina dentata* in Buñuel's films are exaggerated to nearly comical proportions. Conchita is consistently linked to teeth, mouth, and spitting imagery. It is telling that, in one scene, she gargles and spits before getting into bed with Mathieu. Later this metaphor is developed in a climactic scene in which Mateo is watching from outside the gates of the house that he bought for her. As she taunts him in the patio with her young lover, Mateo shouts "open up," to which Conchita responds mockingly, "try using your teeth." Of course, he is unable to enter since he – like Cervantes' Carrizales – doesn't have the necessary "teeth" or a key (both Conchita and Leonora take possession of their men's keys). Conchita then confesses that the thought of him made her want to *vomit* and that she had to *spit* after each kiss. In fact, if the bucket of water that Mathieu hurls at Conchita from the phallic train pulling out of the station is read as the symbolic ejaculation that he is unable to achieve with her, perhaps her retaliatory splash could be seen as a final act of spitting him out.[18] In this case, the mouth of the *vagina dentata*, capable of chewing up and spitting out its victim, might explain the wet panties and bloodied pillow discovered after the violent conflict between Mateo and Conchita, in which the former attacks and injures the latter in a harem-like room in his Seville home.

Similar toothy images suggestive of male fears of women's sexuality appear in Cervantes' stories. Critics have noted that the trap-like house in Cervantes' "El celoso extremeño" is evocative of female genitalia. Nicolás Wey-Gómez describes Luis, the old eunuch who guards the multiple doors, as being "trapped in this metaphorical hymen" (1999: 187) or what Maurice Molho refers to as a "vaginal floodgate" (1990: 755). Alison Weber suggests that Carrizales' house is a maternal womb full of women with big appetites: "His house, a stomach-womb … is an oral paradise. His wife and her maids are encouraged to become *golosas*" (1984: 44). Carrizales compensates for his lack of marital sex by turning to food and eating. Likewise, Leonora and the other women of the house "found their enjoyment in eating sweetmeats; and rarely did a day pass without their making a hundred and one tasty things with honey and sugar" (1972: 152).[19]

Not unlike Leonora, the virginal bride Lorenza in Cervantes' dramatic interlude *El viejo celoso* (The Jealous Old Husband) is also married to a much older, wealthy, and pathologically jealous man. Lorenza's sexual hunger and Cañizares' impotence, again, are characterized in terms of teeth and keys: "all her teeth are sound as a bell, and no one has ever been pulled" (1996: 130), while her elderly

husband lacks a "key": "I sleep with him and I've never seen or felt a key on him" (1996: 127).[20] Reminiscent of Conchita, Lorenza throws water in her jealous husband's face after having cuckolded him with a young lover. Although the water is used to momentarily blind Cañizares so the virile stud can escape unseen, perhaps the symbolic hungry womb, like Conchita, is actually spitting out its victim.

In many accounts of the *vagina dentata* myth, the male hero must engage in a bloody battle to break the genital teeth of the castrating woman, thereby taming the dangerous monster and remolding it into a figure determined by the victorious man (Blackledge, 2004: 167). As Jill Raitt exclaims: "The teeth must be removed! If the teeth are not removed, the male fears that his penis or testicles, or both, will be sheared away" (1980: 416). It is not by chance that in Cervantes' novella the inseparable friends Anselmo and Lotario were known by all as "the two friends" since, according to early modern Spanish slang, "los dos amigos" also referred to "testicles."[21] Accordingly, Anselmo is satisfied with sending in the other half of the famous pair as the potentially sacrificial instrument to defeat his wife: "I want you, my friend Lotario, to prepare yourself to be the instrument to bring about my wish. … if Camila is conquered by you, the conquest will not be taken to the extreme limits" (2007: 257). Cervantes plays with similar imagery in "El celoso extremeño" by giving Loaysa the nickname "virote," which means both virile bachelor and a butcher's knife. While his phallic name implies a tool used for mutilation, Loaysa's plan to get inside the house is described in terms more reminiscent of dental extraction: "I'll pass you some pincers and a hammer, … and with them you'll be able to take the nails out of the lock very easily" (1972: 157). In fact, imagery common to traditional *vagina dentata* myths persists throughout the story. As Loaysa makes his way into the house one of the ladies shouts: "'This is indeed an oath to move the very stones! … you could go into the Cave of Cabra itself!' And grasping him by the breeches she dragged him in, and then all the rest made a circle round him" (1972: 169).[22]

Considering that the brave hero in *vagina dentata* mythology frequently uses instruments designed to break, destroy, or extract (such as pincers, flints, string, iron tongs, rocks, rods, sticks, and so forth), perhaps the violent behavior and the tools that Buñuel's Francisco uses to carry it out (including string and rope, razor blade, knitting needle poked through a keyhole, carpet rod, gun, etc.) make more sense in terms of the "tooth-breaking" hero who fears that by not doing so, he will be humiliated, laughed at, castrated, or killed. However, the inherent danger can also dissuade some men from entering into battle. In "El curioso impertinente" Lotario depicts Camila as a precious diamond whose strength has no need of testing: "to take that diamond and put it between an anvil and a hammer and there, by dint of blows, prove it as hard and fine as they [gem cutters] said" (2007: 260). Later when Lotario finally succeeds in seducing Camila, the amorous clash is described in terms of bombing and excavating rock: "to lay siege to that fortress … with all diligence he tunneled through the rock of her integrity with such explosives that even if she'd been made entirely of brass, she would have fallen" (2007: 269–270).

Could we, then, read the explosives in both *Él* and *Cet obscur objet du désir* (which are linked to intimacy with women) in terms of excavating or bombing the battleground inside the treacherous vagina? In *Él*, for example, the close-up shot of Francisco's first kiss with Gloria cuts to a long shot of an explosion at rival Raul's construction site, while in *Cet obscur objet du désir* the frequent terrorist bombings announce or conclude sensual scenes between Conchita and Mateo. Surely the bloodied pillow and bloodstained gown at the end of *Cet obscur objet du désir* could also signal either the feared castration or the hero's fight to break the snapping teeth. For that matter, could Camila's bloody self-inflicted wound in "El curioso impertinente" actually represent the drama of the castrating woman instead of symbolizing the ripping of the hymen? Furthermore, is the well-timed interruption of the reading of "El curioso impertinente" by Don Quixote's battle with the wineskins (immediately after the gory scene when Camila takes a dagger to her own flesh) another indication of *vagina dentata* imagery? Certainly one could read Don Quixote's dream-state skirmish with the blood-gushing enemy as a symbolic enactment of castration (undoubtedly Freud would have interpreted the decapitation of the imaginary villain in terms of castration anxiety) or perhaps a desire to break the teeth of the snapping vagina.[23] What's more, during this scene the barber also throws a bucket of water at Don Quixote to wake him up, but the measure is futile.

It is not a coincidence that Don Quixote is asleep when he tries to kill the enemy. If we consider the other iconic dream episode in *Don Quixote* (appropriately staged in the Cave of Montesinos), our hero must be lowered by rope into a bat-infested cavern full of castration and *vagina dentata* imagery. Carroll Johnson argues:

> [Don Quixote] projects in Durandarte his fears of castration and impotence … Her [Belerma's] sensual red mouth surrounding white teeth suggests the classic *vagina dentellata* of the castrating female, and this in combination with the emphasis on daggers and dirks – the instruments of mutilation – reiterates our hero's fear of castration and simultaneously suggests the most probable childhood cause of his chronic inability to interact successfully with women. (1983: 167)

Johnson's analysis of Don Quixote's fear of women revealed during his unconscious experience in a cave is relevant for Buñuel's own confession of his dissatisfaction with sexual relations during his dreams:

> One of the strange things about dreams is that in them I've never been able to make love in a truly satisfying way, usually because people are watching … mocking, curious looks … or sometimes, when the climactic moment arrives, I find the woman sewn up tight. Sometimes I can't find the opening at all; she has the seamless body of a statue. (1983: 97)

Reminiscent of one early modern emblem of a virgin depicted as a statue/sculpture –with the motto *immota movebo* ("Immobile, I will attract") – both Buñuel (at least in his dreams) and his protagonist Mathieu are drawn to women who

appear to be sealed up tight.[24] In fact, it appears that Cervantes' protagonists Anselmo and Carrizales (as well as Don Quixote) and Buñuel's Francisco and Mathieu – while they may display a desire to domesticate the toothed beast – ultimately close off the dangerous mouth by suturing it shut, and thereby retreat from the bloody battle. In this way, perhaps the original French movie poster advertising *Cet obscur objet du désir*, which features a large pair of disembodied lips stitched shut, provides an even better emblem for the way in which medieval hymen stitching is woven into the symbolic fabric of Cervantes' texts.

As I have argued above, Buñuel's sensibilities prove valuable for new readings of Cervantes' prose. Yet turning even further into Spain's literary heritage we discover that the filmmaker's treatment of virginity and celibacy, mutilation, and madness is equally relevant for revisiting medieval narratives that explore these themes. Especially given Buñuel's life-long interest in saints, holy pilgrimages, and popular stories of miracles and heresy during the Middle Ages, we might question whether a similar pattern of men's fear of women, castration, and the *vagina dentata* surfaces in the medieval texts that would establish many of the persistent cultural narratives featuring desire and violence. In fact, Buñuel credits Gonzalo de Berceo specifically for inspiring a scene that dramatizes a miracle performed by the Virgin Mary during the picaresque pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela in *La Voie lactée* (The Milky Way, 1969).[25] Buñuel also weaves medieval miracles and temptations into other films such as *Simón del desierto* (Simon of the Desert, 1965), in which the devil takes several forms to entice the ascetic protagonist. In this way, the director creates a dialogue with medieval narratives such as Berceo's thirteenth-century *Milagros de Nuestra Señora* (Miracles of Our Lady) and Alfonso X's *Cantigas de Santa María* (Songs of Holy Mary) that becomes propitious when rethinking premodern texts. In Berceo's miracle "El romero de Santiago" (The Pilgrim Deceived by the Devil), for example, after having sexual relations with his mistress before his holy pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela, the cleric Guiralt is easily persuaded by the devil (disguised as an angel) to castrate himself and then cut his own throat as atonement for his transgression: "he took out his knife that he had sharpened; the poor crazy wretch cut off his genitals; then he slit his own throat and died" (Berceo, 1997: 50). The consequence for having sexual relations with a woman when he should have been observing clerical celibacy is both literal and symbolic castration – first by removing his own genitals and then beheading himself. As further confirmation of women's power over men's reproductive organs, even the Virgin Mary is unwilling to reattach his penis as part of her restorative miracle: "As for the wound he had from the throat-cutting, its scar barely showed, … Of everything else he was healed and mended, … but his private parts, all that were cut off, never grew back one bit and he remained in that condition" (1997: 52). The cautionary tale of the *vagina dentata* was not lost on the "lucky" pilgrim: "And this pilgrim pondered his fortune: how God had delivered him from the wicked teeth" (1997: 53). Unlike the picaresque hymen menders (who repair women's virginity in order to sell it again), the Virgin Mary chooses not to reattach the pilgrim's genitals so she might ensure his future chastity.[26]

While Alfonso X's version of the castrated pilgrim (Cantiga 26) in his collection of Marian miracles provides a graphic visual depiction of the bloody tragedy, perhaps the verbal and visual texts in Cantiga 105 are even more significant when analyzed in terms of Buñuel's explorations in *Él* and *Cet obscur objet du désir*. Like Mathieu's repeated frustration with and increasing violence toward Conchita (who insists on preserving her virginity), the husband in Cantiga 105 resorts to mutilating his wife's genitals when (due to his bride's promise to the Virgin Mary that she will remain a virgin) he is unable to force her into conjugal relations:

> The Virgin protected the girl: although she was in the bridegroom's power, he could not possess her. … The husband could never have his way with the maiden. Therefore, he did her such great harm that he nearly killed her. He treacherously struck her with a knife in such a private part of her body that it shames me to mention it. … All the physicians in Pisa could not close her wound. (2000: 131–132)

In the panel revealing the genital mutilation, it is unclear whether a group of accomplices are assisting the husband in his sadistic revenge or whether a team of doctors are attempting to close the wound (the illustration depicts four individuals restraining the young woman while one man performs an undisclosed procedure on her genitals). As punishment for attacking his wife's private parts, the husband perishes in a wildfire (Figure 17.2).



Figure 17.2 Detail from Alfonso X's *Cantiga 105*. Courtesy of the Instituto Amatller De Arte Hispanico. © Fundació Instituto Amatller de Arte Hispánico. Archivo Mas.

One might argue that the conflict in Cantiga 105 prefigures Mathieu's struggle with Conchita. It is also reminiscent of Francisco's impulse to attack Gloria's genitals due to his own fear of castration by the toothed vagina (either by suturing it shut or by using the razor to break the snarling teeth). Although the genital suturing scene in *Él* is dramatically implied but not graphically shown (we don't know for certain what Francisco intended to do to Gloria), in both medieval miracles the result of sexual relations (or the intent to force carnal relations) is deadly for the men.[27]

As we discover in premodern texts and Buñuel's cinema, the *vagina dentata* surfaces as a striking image that links the *restitutio virginitatis* tradition to the fear of castrating women. Since most literary hymen menders were also known to be witches, it is telling that the highly influential fifteenth-century witchcraft manual *Malleus Maleficarum* identifies the insatiable "mouth of the womb" as responsible for women's tendency to access evil powers to destroy men's virility (Kramer and Sprenger, 1971: 47). According to the authors Kramer and Sprenger, this sexual interference is often achieved through methods such as "obstructing their generative force" (i.e., impotence) or "by removing the members accommodated to that act" (Kramer and Sprenger, 1971: 47).[28] Was it this panic over women's dangerous capacity to corrupt men's virtue or to mutilate their manhood that inspired Don Quixote and Francisco in *Él* to preserve their own virginity for so many years? Perhaps Buñuel provides an answer to this question when assessing his vision in *Cet obscur objet du désir*: "In addition to the theme of the impossibility of ever truly possessing a woman's body, the film insists upon maintaining that climate of insecurity and imminent disaster" (2003: 250). In other words, "a chaste woman should be treated like relics – adored but not touched" (Lotario's advice to Anselmo in "El curioso impertinente," Cervantes, 2007: 261).

Notes

1 See Rebolledo (1979); Donnell (1999); Higginbotham (1979).
2 Critics such as Víctor Fuentes, Carlos Rebolledo, Gwynne Edwards, Ian Christie, Peter William Evans, Agustín Sánchez Vidal, Sidney Donnell, and Virginia Higginbotham, to name just a few, have noted the presence of medieval and Golden Age literary tradition in Buñuel's work.
3 *La Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea* was published in 1499 and, according to the number of editions printed, remained the most popular (yet controversial) work of fiction during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.
4 See Gossy (1989) and Dopico Black (1999) for discussion of Golden Age hymen menders.
5 Attribution to Cervantes of "La tía fingida" has been inconsistent and frequently contested. Gossy (1989: 83–109); Márquez Villanueva (1991).
6 Fuentes (2000: 92); Edwards (2005: 74); Gutiérrez-Albilla (2008: 162).
7 Buache (1973: 66); Fuentes (1993: 121); Evans (2004: 114); Gutiérrez-Albilla (2008: 162).
8 Kinder (1993: 304); Fuentes (2000: 93); Arias (2001); Evans (2004); Lo (2008: 37).

9 Numerous critics have studied the importance of Carrizales' house in "El celoso extremeño," just as Francisco's house in *Él* has become another character in the film. See Avilés (1998); Egginton (2006).

10 "La castidad que la sangre de Camila supuestamente confirma no es más genuina, a fin de cuentas, que los virgos falsos de las prostitutas que la Celestina vende una y otra vez como vírgenes" (Dopico Black, 1999: 106).

11 See Arias (2001: 224–233).

12 Sandro also notes that "the question arises whether the tear and the blood refer to an event that has not been told. The image of the torn fabric surrounded by the hoop suggests rather transparently the torn maidenhead of a wedding night" (1987: 154).

13 "Buñuel and Dalí, both familiar with Vermeer's painting – it hung on one of the walls of the Residencia de Estudiantes – were highly conscious of and disturbed by the fact that female tranquility could well conceal powerful and aggressive sexual appetites, and in *Un chien andalou* this is precisely the kind of woman the protagonist proves to be" (Edwards, 2005: 64). See also Sánchez Vidal (1993: 157–166).

14 Cummings (2004: 86).

15 *Un chien andalou* is likewise imbued with images of the devouring female: "When, later, on, she searches for the young man and becomes aware of his inability to respond to her – the sequence in which his mouth disappears – she underlines the complete contrast between them by ostentatiously lipsticking her mouth and sticking out her tongue at him … she is indeed the sexually aggressive women Buñuel feared. … This deep-seated anxiety was also embodied in an image common to both Dalí and Buñuel: that of the female praying mantis who, after mating, devours the male. (Edwards, 2005: 64–65).

16 For *vagina dentata* see Elwin (1943); Lederer (1970); Raitt (1980); Blackledge (2004: 165–170); Creed (2007: 105–108).

17 By contrast, in Cervantes' novellas, both paranoid husbands ultimately accept blame for their marital tragedies, (like Carrizales, Anselmo finally admits "I was the author of my own dishonor" [1972: 290]).

18 In his memoirs, Buñuel gives partial credit to the bucket of water scene to activities during his student years: "I was also responsible for inventing the ritual we called 'las mujadures de primavera,' or 'the watering rites of spring,' which consisted quite simply of pouring a bucket of water over the head of the first person to come along. Shades of this ritual worked themselves into the scene in *That Obscure Object of Desire*" (2003: 65).

19 Clamurro (1997: 179); Avilés (1998: 84).

20 Wagschal (2006: 105).

21 Alzieu, Jammes, and Lissorgues (2000: 131–132, 330) for references to sewing as metaphor for sexual relations and "dos amigos" as testes.

22 However, once the virile Loaysa gains entry into the house, he is emasculated by the devouring women, who objectify him in terms of traditional female beauty: "'What a splendid crop of hair he has, so handsome and curly!' Another said, 'Oh, what white teeth!' Another said, 'What eyes, so full and clear! And look how green they are, just like emeralds!' this one praised his mouth, that one his feet, and the whole lot of them together made a detailed study of him" (1972: 170).

23 Freud, "Medusa's Head" (1997).

24 See Villava's emblem of the "Image or sculpture of a maiden" in Vistarini and Cull (1999: 436). For study of "El celoso extremeño" and emblems see D'Onofrio (2008).

25 De la Colina and Pérez Turrent (1994); Sánchez Vidal (1991: 208).
26 For more on "eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven" see Kuefler (2006); Murray (2006); Giles (2010).
27 "*Buñuel*: It could be to cut the thread after having sewn up her sex. Or … perhaps he wants to cut off her clitoris. I don't know. That is him. I would not have cut off her clitoris. Sew her up, that yes. (*Laughter*)" (de la Colina and Pérez Turrent, 1994: 97).
28 The iconic Celestina, Leonora in Rodrigo de Reinoso's "Coplas de las comadres," Camacha in Cervantes' "El coloquio de los perros," and Pablo's mother in Quevedo's *Buscón* are all known to be witches who also repaired maidenheads.

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Part Five

An Exterminating Angel

18

The Galdós Intertext in *Viridiana*

Sally Faulkner

It is well known that Buñuel's film *Viridiana* (1961) is loosely based on Galdós's novel *Halma* (1895). Given that *Viridiana* was banned in 1961 before its commercial release in Franco's Spain (a scandal to which I will return), the dictator's censors were among the few members of the Spanish population to have seen Buñuel's film before its official Spanish premiere in 1977, two years after the dictator's death. It is thus a bitter irony of Spanish film history that a censor, servant of a dictatorship, was able to be the first to remark, in 1963, that *Viridiana* was more of a Galdós adaptation than *Tristana*.[1] Scholarly literature also confirms the influence of Spain's most famous realist author, a Spanish Dickens, in a useful, if Anglocentric, shorthand, on a director who still is, notwithstanding his transnational lives and afterlives, Spain's most famous cinematic son. Agustín Sánchez Vidal highlights the "aire 'galdosiano'" ("Galdosian" air) of *Viridiana*, and its connections with both *Halma* and *Ángel Guerra* (1890–1891), noting too that Buñuel had originally planned to combine Galdós's *Nazarín* (1895) and the sequel novel *Halma* in his 1958 *Nazarín* adaptation (Sánchez Vidal, 1984: 224). John Hopewell also points out that *Viridiana* "draws on" *Halma* (1986: 261, n.10), while José Enrique Monterde mentions the "resonancias de Pérez Galdós" (Pérez Galdós resonances) in the film (1995: 292). For Víctor Fuentes, "la impronta de Galdós" (the Galdós stamp) is present in *Nazarín*, *Viridiana*, and *Tristana* (2000: 140), that's to say, both *Nazarín* and *Tristana*, which declare that they are "based on" the novels in the credits, and *Viridiana*, which does not. Fuentes also names both Galdós's *Halma* and *Misericordia* (1897) with regard to the 1961 film (2000: 140). Román Gubern goes further than other critics and proposes that *Viridiana* is an unacknowledged *Halma* adaptation (2000: 170), while Karen Goldman qualifies this: "a very free adaptation" (2003: 69).[2] Most recently, Arantxa Aguirre Carballeira remarks that the character of Viridiana is inspired by Leré of *Ángel Guerra* and Halma of the eponymous novel (2006: 154).

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Two things are striking about this brief survey: on the one hand, the excess of terms used to describe these links, from the vague connection implied by "air," to the more dependent one indicated by "adaptation"; on the other, the lack of detail regarding the connections between writer and director – which this chapter aims to provide. Regarding the first point, the current study is not concerned to identify where *Viridiana* might fit in an endlessly expandable classification system of adaptations as "borrowing, intersecting, and transforming" (to take one example of many such taxonomies).[3] With regard to the acknowledged adaptations *Nazarín* and *Tristana*, I have referred elsewhere to the connection as a "debt" Buñuel owed Galdós, in order to insert a pinprick into the inflated auteurist rhetoric surrounding the director's supposed transcendence of all his source texts in his adaptations (Faulkner, 2004: 126–162). Here I propose "intertext" as an alternative, following Robert Stam's defense of this approach to adaptation in film (2005). A further advantage of this term is that it conveys how this study works with, rather than against, inspiring previous work on *Viridiana*'s alternative "intertexts," such as Freudian and Kristevan psychoanalysis, Deleuzian theory, and the film's plural pictorial, musical, and literary references other than Galdós (e.g., Goya, the Picaresque Novel, Valle-Inclán).[4] Galdós should take a prominent place alongside these alternative intertexts.

In a slip that betrays genuflection to Buñuel the auteur rather than critical engagement with his work, Fuentes suggests that Buñuel imprints a "Galdosian stamp" on his films with "la varita mágica de su genio creador" (the magic wand of his creative genius) (2000: 157). The first section of this chapter will trace the scholarly reception of Buñuel's literary adaptations, paying attention to the auteurist approach that allows Fuentes, in what is otherwise such an insightful study, to get away with this appeal to the supernatural. Rather than gesture toward the director's wizardry, in the central section of this study I place *Viridiana* in the context of recent adaptation theory and offer close textual analysis to argue for the Galdós intertext. In what I term a process of mutual illumination between novel and film, I also use fresh readings of the novels within literary criticism to show that Buñuel's film and Galdós's novel shed light on each other. In the final section, I consider the place of Buñuel's Galdós projects in the history of Spanish film, comparing the reception histories of extant films, like *Viridiana* and *Tristana*, and noting the potential of unrealized projects, such as *Doña Perfecta*, to conclude that these amount to a series of missed opportunities whereby Galdós in particular, and literary adaptations generally, might have played a more prominent role in the national cinema.

Buñuel and Literary Adaptations

For the long period in which the auteurist approach dominated Buñuel studies, his literary adaptations – some 21 of his 32 films are based on literary sources – were a potential problem. Since the development of auteurism was tied up with the

development of film studies as an academic discipline distinct from literary studies – though, ironically, auteurism applied a literary concept of authorship to film – literary adaptations, which parade their "impurity" as both film and literature, did not fit.[5] As if this assault on the proper boundaries of each separate art was not bad enough, literary adaptations were associated with the further crimes of being stylistically pedestrian (because not based on original scripts) and ideologically conservative (because of their appeal to the classics). How could such "safe" films fit into the auteurist narrative of the "dangerous" director?

Two examples from Franco's Spain – one from academia, one from film – show how these associations could be turned to one's advantage. Antonio Lara has recently recalled that he won approval to write a doctoral thesis on Buñuel at the Complutense University of Madrid in the late 1960s because it focused on the apparently respectable question of his literary adaptations (2001: 9). Despite events earlier in the decade like the scandal triggered by *Viridiana* in 1961 and the rejections of the script of *Tristana* in 1962 and 1963, the film of Galdós's 1892 novel was passed by the censors in 1969 because it looked like a safe, classic adaptation, which was faithful to the original. Of course, the relocation of the action from the 1890s to the particularly turbulent pre-Civil War 1930s was anything but "safe," and the status of liberal Galdós hardly "classic," but we have the contemporary testimonial of censor Marcelo Arreita-Jáuregui, who had prohibited the script in 1963, but, by the end of the decade, recommended it because "[Se trata] de una novela de Pérez Galdós, que es un clásico, ajustada en el guión al espíritu del autor" ([It's] a Pérez Galdós novel, which is a classic, with a script that matches the spirit of the author) (quoted in Navarrete, 2003: 80).

Of course, not all literary adaptations use the "safe" cliché as a cover for innovative work, but there are a number of examples of Spanish films under the Franco dictatorship that use this tactic to elude censorship. "*Base your film on a classic*, then subvert that classic's sense," is Hopewell's summary of the maneuver in relation to *La leyenda del Alcalde de Zalamea* (The Legend of the Mayor of Zalamea Camus, 1972) (1986: 77, emphasis in original). I would revise this thesis and argue that, rather than just subversion, whereby the film works *against* the literary intertext, the films of Spain's lively tradition of dissident literary adaptations in fact work creatively *with* the literary intertext. An auteurist approach to Buñuel's work in this area insists on the "against" thesis, arguing that the interest of his literary adaptations lies in how they transcend their literary intertexts, rather than in how they playfully work with them.[6] This neo-Romantic rhetoric of the individual genius wielding a magic wand can show that using a literary source – or, indeed, working within the confines of a commercial industry – is only an apparent restraint for an auteur; in fact, the auteurist argument goes, an individual's voice can be heard by working against the potentially muffling effect of the pre-existing material – or commercial obligations.

Recent considerations of Buñuel's work in commercial Spanish and Mexican cinemas offer a corrective to the "against" argument and point to a new direction for the analysis of the literary adaptations. Jo Labanyi argues that Buñuel's work in

Spanish popular film as producer for Filmófono from 1935 to 1936 (in reality, oftentimes director too) complements and feeds into his later work as a director, rather than being an aberration in his career. She notes, for example, that the emphases on chance, performance, and class satire are three elements shared by both popular cinema of this period and the avant-garde, with which Buñuel is more readily associated (Labanyi, 2000a: 301). Likewise, addressing the director's commercial Mexican films, Ernesto Acevedo-Muñoz refutes "'the man' and 'his films'" (2003: 5) approach of auteurist criticism in order to "upset our image of Buñuel as the European Surrealist phenomenon who was ill-at-ease within a national film industry" (2003: 11) and reveal, conversely, that he "found a middle ground … where he could defend his position as a Surrealist on the margins of the nation while also gaining access to a national film industry that was regulated by laws and censorship and was dependent on government funding" (2003: 148). This study is likewise attracted to the "middle ground," where the director meets his source texts on equal terms in a process I term "mutual illumination."

Buñuel and Galdós: Mutual Illumination

Linda Hutcheon defines adaptation as an "extended, deliberate, announced revisitation of a particular work of art" (2006: 170), but it seems short-sighted to exclude *Viridiana* from consideration as an adaptation only because here, in contrast to *Nazarín* and *Tristana*, the Galdós intertext is unannounced. The connections between the film and Galdós's novels extend far beyond fleeting citation, as the critics discussed at the start of this chapter have frequently affirmed, yet scarcely examined. More forgiving, therefore, is Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelehan's differentiation between a brief citation and extensive, if unacknowledged, engagement: "It is not that we demand adaptations acknowledge their status as such, but that it is a sustained recognition where the adaptation utilises the text it appropriates or adapts with a purpose, even if that purpose isn't explicitly announced" (2010: 18). These authors go on to suggest that uncovering an unacknowledged source may be referred to as a "'found' adaptation" (2010: 18),[7] but this risks reducing the film to a single source, whereas "intertext" stresses the multiplicity of sources – so many of which have already received full examination with regard to *Viridiana*.

Stam's defense of "intertextuality" in adaptation studies marshals Bakhtin's "dialogism," conceived in the 1930s, as a model for the ways texts intersect, Kristeva's development of this notion as "intertextuality" in the 1960s, and Genette's theory of "transtextuality" as "the endless permutation of textualities" in the 1990s (Stam, 2005: 8). Stam concludes by recommending the full apparatus of Genette's narratological analysis for adaptation studies (2005: 26–52). For the purposes of the present study, I take a selection from his extensive list: "amplif[ication]" (2005: 34), "narrators" (2005: 35), and "point of view" (2005: 38).

Further, I take Stam's observation that "every text, and every adaptation, 'points' in many directions, back, forward and sideways" (2005: 27) as an invitation to move back and forth between film and novels, and thus propose a new, dynamic model for analyzing adaptation between Buñuel and Galdós as a process of mutual illumination.[8] On the one hand, viewing *Viridiana* through Galdós's novels uncovers new textures; on the other, rereading Galdós through Buñuel's film reveals further meaning. As Fuentes notes, in a remark that is long on insight though short on detail (2000: 140), Buñuel's films look forward to some of the insights of recent Galdós criticism. In the following discussion of the three novels that critics agree most influence *Viridiana*, I hope to show that if this was the case for Fuentes in 2000, it is even more so today. We will never know in what order Buñuel read *Halma* (1895), *Misericordia* (1897), and *Ángel Guerra* (1890–91), so I discuss them here in order of the scenes they influence in the film.

In *Viridiana*, Buñuel transgresses, as is both well known and much enjoyed, a whole series of taboos, from incest (Jaime and Viridiana are uncle and niece) to necrophilia (the drugged Viridiana replaces Jaime's deceased wife at uncle and niece's grotesque wedding). An auteurist study may link these transgressions to the director's private obsessions, and Buñuel's interviews (e.g., Pérez Turrent and de la Colina, 1993) and autobiography (1982) give ample textual support to this thesis. However, a literary adaptation study of *Viridiana* reveals that the source of inspiration for the primary prohibition explored in the film, sexual obsession with a would-be nun, is Galdós's *Ángel Guerra*. Picking out just a few details from this sprawling work of Spanish literary decadence that are especially relevant for a comparison with the film, we may note first that when its eponymous protagonist charges the care of his daughter to the novice Leré, he becomes sexually attracted to her. Ángel, therefore, is ironically named, as he is tormented by his physical obsession, and his spiritual sublimation of that lustful obsession determines the entire subsequent narrative – at one point he plans, for instance, to become a monk. It is not at the level of narrative, then, that the *Ángel Guerra* intertext is to be observed in *Viridiana*, as Buñuel and scriptwriter Julio Alejandro take plot development in an entirely different direction, but rather at the level of detail.

Reading, first, from Galdós to Buñuel, part 7 of chapter 4, volume 1 of the novel is a clear source for sequence 4 of the film, in which Ramona spies on Viridiana's preparations for sleep in her bedroom.[9] Galdós begins with his narrator's playful description of an Ángel racked by inappropriate desire, which, with its interlacing of the sexual and the spiritual, looks forward to Jaime and Ramona's nocturnal activities in the film: while master plays sacred music on the organ as he fantasizes about his niece, maid spies on her, then recounts to him her voyeuristic discoveries. In Galdós's original:

> por unas y otras cosas, por lo moral y por lo que no es moral, la maestra interesaba al papá de la discípula, despertando en él sensaciones y anhelos diversos, que en breve tiempo pasaban de lo más a lo menos spiritual, y viceversa.

> [for one reason or another, moral ones and immoral ones, the teacher was of interest to the disciple's daddy, awakening in him diverse sensations and longings, which, in quick succession, became more or less spiritual, and viceversa.] (Pérez Galdós, 1970, 153; translations into English throughout the chapter are my own)

Especially relevant to the film is the information, relayed to us by the narrator, of the following events. Ángel "no podía … resistir cierta comezón de vigilar [a Leré] de cerca, de sorprenderla en su vida íntima; y movido de ardiente curiosidad, puso en práctica un procedimiento poco delicado para satisfacerla" (couldn't resist the itch to spy [on Leré] close up, to catch her in private unawares; and, guided by a burning curiosity, he put a rather undignified practice into operation to satisfy it) (1970: 153). Our voyeur dispatches the house staff so he can make a hole in the door leading from his dead mother's bedroom to Leré's, then spends almost the entire night watching her activities of prayer and meditation, only to be denied a glimpse of her body because, despite positioning his spy-hole opposite her bed, she lies down to sleep on the floor. Buñuel seizes on this scene, in what Stam terms "amplification." First, Galdós's narrator's tongue-in-cheek observation that Ángel "no pensó ni por un momento abusar de su posición de jefe de casa" (didn't think for one moment of abusing his position as head of the household) (1970: 153) becomes in Buñuel's hands the grotesque wedding night, which falls just short of being exactly that. Next, Buñuel recreates the scene of voyeurism, with the addition of the brilliant detail that the house staff, Jaime's servant Ramona, does the spying. In this way, Buñuel introduces self-reflexivity as the viewer realizes he or she is implicated in this grubby, three-way exchange of looks.[10] Finally, it might not be over-stretching the point to argue that the detail of the protagonist's deceased mother could plant the seed for Buñuel's psychoanalytically informed study of necrophilia a century later.[11]

Rereading Galdós through Buñuel, the self-reflexivity of the scene comes to the fore. At the moment when it seems Ángel's desire to see Leré's body will be satisfied, the narrator shifts in tone with the exclamation "¡Pero ay, qué chasco para el centinela!" (But oh, how disappointing for the sentry!) (Pérez Galdós, 1970: 154). This abrupt shift from the preceding third-person narration, in which the protagonist is referred to by his surname, to exclamation and a military metaphor of surveillance, catches the reader off-guard and hints that they might share in the disappointment.[12] Buñuel, therefore, predicts the emphasis placed by recent Galdós criticism on the self-reflexive irony of his apparently all-controlling narrators (e.g., Jagoe, 1994: 154). In a further instance of mutual illumination, Galdós's narrator's subsequent observation regarding the intertwining of religion and desire might serve as an epigraph for Buñuel's entire *oeuvre* in the following century. For Ángel, Leré's "misticismo le sabía mal porque habiendo sido espuela convertíase en freno de sus deseos" (mysticism was annoying because, having been the spur of his desires, it became their check) (Pérez Galdós, 1970: 155).

Ángel Guerra is an important intertext in the first section of *Viridiana* (sequences 1–11) owing to its exploration of voyeurism and its study of the psychological inseparability of prohibition and desire – its inextricable "spur" and "check." Furthermore, as José de la Colina suggests, the novel also lends a number of details to the physical attacks on Viridiana and Jorge when they interrupt the beggars' orgy in sequence 25 (Pérez Turrent and de la Colina, 1993: 123). In Galdós's novel, Ángel decides to offer charity on his own terms rather than entering an established monastery by creating a new religious order; similarly, Viridiana refuses to re-enter the convent in which we first meet her, setting up instead her own charitable institute on her deceased uncle's estate, which she has partly inherited. At the climactic end of Galdós's novel, the three beneficiaries of Ángel's charity, the Babel brothers and Don Pito's son, rob and mortally wound him (1970: 692–698). Part 3 of chapter 6, volume 3, ends with him tied up in the bedroom with bindings including the sash originally wrapped around Poli's waist, and a rope that Fausto, the lame Babel brother, was using as a belt (1970: 696). Likewise, when Viridiana's pauper protégés turn on her and her cousin, Jorge is tied up in the bedroom, while the detail of the lame brother's rope finds its way into the film in the form of Rita's skipping rope, which is wrapped around the lame beggar's waist during his attempted violation of his benefactress.

It should be noted, however, that the brothers' attack in *Ángel Guerra* is tied up with the narrative strand regarding Ángel's rejection of their sister, his former lover, Dulce. Buñuel's beggars are entirely disconnected, in narrative terms, from Viridiana's family, and their unsentimental characterization derives from a second Galdós novel, *Misericordia*, which offers further instances of Buñuel's amplification of the original text and the mutual illumination of novel and film. Buñuel critics have rightly noted that the director's portrayal of the socially destitute in both *Viridiana* and earlier pieces like *Los olvidados* (The Forgotten Ones, aka The Young and the Damned, 1950), exhibits intertexts, both literary and visual, with what Sánchez-Biosca terms Spain's "rabid realism," from the picaresque novel to Goya's paintings (1999: 35). Fuentes notes the influence of *Misericordia* too, "uno de los capítulos más descarnados de todo el realismo español" (one of the most corrosive chapters of Spanish realism), in terms of both the characterization and language of the beggars (2000: 157, 159, n.22) (Figure 18.1).

Two instances of amplification add flesh to the bones of Fuentes's argument. Originally read by literary critics as a spiritual study of charity, an interpretation that emphasizes the saintly activities of the protagonist Benina, more recent studies have focused on *Misericordia*'s representation of grubby mendacity (e.g., Fuentes Peris, 2003: 176–194). Likewise, the similarity between Benina's and Viridiana's charitable acts is of less consequence than the rich links between novel and film in their unsentimental characterization of the beggars and their activities. Buñuel reads particularly attentively the opening chapters of the novel, which describe the beggars of the church of San Sebastián and include instances of "rabid realism," like the description of one female beggar as follows: "Si vale



Figure 18.1 Beggars in *Viridiana*. Unión Industrial Cinematográfica, Gustavo Alatriste, and Films 59.

comparar rostros de personas con rostros de animales, podríamos imaginarla como un gato que hubiera perdido el pelo en una riña, seguida de un chapuzón" (If there's any worth in comparing people's faces with animal's faces, we could imagine her as a cat that had lost its fur in a fight, followed by a dip) (Pérez Galdós, 1967: 15). Buñuel's beggars, scrubbed of make-up,[13] wearing rags acquired from a group of Gypsies living under a bridge over the Manzanares river (Sánchez-Biosca, 1999: 45) and including in their number one actual beggar, who plays the character accused of leprosy, and a non-professional actor as the dwarf (Pérez Turrent and de la Colina, 1993: 120), match the spirit of the novelist's earlier descriptions. Buñuel is also interested in Galdós's exposure of the prejudices and hierarchies within the group. "Como en toda región del mundo hay clases, sin que se exceptúen de esta división capital las más ínfimas jerarquías, allí no eran todos los pobres lo mismo" (Just as in every part of the world there are classes, with even the tiniest of hierarchies respecting this key division, there, not all the poor were the same) (1967: 16). Buñuel follows Galdós as his beggars too mimic class division, thus both novelist and director self-consciously interrogate prejudice by locating it among those who themselves also attract prejudice. Galdós's beggars' hierarchy is based on length of service as a mendicant (1967: 16–17); Buñuel, meanwhile takes the detail from the novel where snooty Juliana accuses Almudena of leprosy (1967: 309) and has Viridana's group of paupers all cruelly shun their possibly leprous brother.

Buñuel, as has been much enjoyed, has great fun with bridal apparel in *Viridiana*, cramming, for instance, fetishist Jaime's foot into a white Cinderella shoe, and dressing Viridiana up at the necrophilic wedding. A further use of the garments

occurs during the beggars' orgy, as the character accused of leprosy dons the corset to dance an incongruous paso doble to the sound of Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus," scattering the feathers of the pet dove he has eaten like so much grotesque confetti. The bridal veil that is draped around his head and shoulders ends up entangled in the feet of the blind beggar as he makes his escape from the party. Reading Buñuel back into Galdós, then, the exaggerated juxtapositions of the sequence where the San Sebastián beggars accost a wedding party for alms come more sharply into focus:

> Al ver salir a la novia, tan emperifollada, y a las señoras y caballeros de su compañía, [los mendigos] cayeron sobre ellos como nube de langosta, y al padrino le estrujaron el gabán, y hasta le chafaron el sombrero. Trabajo le costó al buen señor sacudirse de la terrible plaga.
>
> [When they saw the bride come out, all dolled up in her finery, and the ladies and gentlemen of her party, [the beggars] fell upon them like a cloud of locusts, and the best man got his topcoat squashed and even his hat crumpled. It was very difficult for the good gentleman to shake off the terrible plague.] (Pérez Galdós, 1967: 152)

Buñuel seizes on those incongruous juxtapositions between the bride's adornment, the ruffled get-up of the best man, and the "terrible plague," and feeds them into the perverse spectacle of the cross-dressing disease-ridden beggar.

From *Ángel Guerra* and *Misericordia*, then, Buñuel takes the inspiration for some of his most celebrated scenes, highlighting, in turn, the self-reflexive and materialist dimensions of Galdós's work that literary critics have only more recently emphasized. With *Halma*, the engagement is less one of Stam's "amplification" of key scenes, and rather an adaptation to film of the point of view that Galdós's narrator encourages us to adopt toward character. Leaving aside the straightforward overlap in plot between Halma's establishment of a charitable institute in the rural isolation of Pedralba, and Viridiana's organization of the same in the unnamed Spanish countryside, an analysis of *Viridiana* as a literary adaptation throws into relief the ways the female protagonists are absent presences at the center of both works. The titles "*Halma*" and "*Viridiana*" are misnomers, for both women are blank screens onto which male characters project their desires. Despite the apparent association of both protagonists with language by giving their names to these titles,[14] this "blankness" is created by symbolically denying the word to both, and by reducing both to an association with the body. Reading, first, from Galdós to Buñuel, an analysis of narrative perspective uncovers this silencing strategy; rereading, next, Galdós through Buñuel, the role of the body is thrown into relief.

Recent Galdós criticism has highlighted the playful role of the narrator in the novelist's work. *Halma* exhibits many of the mischievous traits of the writer's contemporary novels in this regard, including an opening paragraph which, by being both pompous and self-deprecating, alerts the reader to the fact that all subsequent information will be subjectively, and perhaps unreliably, mediated: "Doy a mis

lectores la mejor prueba de estimación sacrificándoles mi amor propio de erudito investigador de geneologías … vamos, que les perdono la vida" (I give to my readers the greatest proof of the high esteem in which I hold them by sacrificing for them my pride as an erudite scholar of family trees … that's to say, I'll spare them the life story) (Pérez Galdós, 2002: 245). There follows, of course, details of precisely that life story; then a swashbuckling account, brimming with romantic and Romantic cliché, of the trials and tribulations of Halma's first marriage (2002: 246–259). How are we to be sure, the reader is encouraged to ask, that the subsequent account, which culminates in her second marriage, is not similarly filtered? This mediated nature of our access to character culminates in a highly self-referential episode in which information about Halma is relayed to us through a double filter. In chapters 2 and 3 of part 5, the narrator reports the discussion that three male characters have concerning the intolerable fact that Halma's matriarchal institute lacks a male director. The three men include the priest, Don Remegio, the doctor, Pedro Laínez, and the bailiff, José Amador, and thus symbolize the powerful trilogy of religion, science, and capitalism (2002: 386–391).[15] Students of the birth of Modernity in the crucial decades of the late nineteenth century will find a playful take on the subject in this debate between the three vying factions. Its ostensible aim is to give a leader to the directionless state of Pedralba; the actual aim is to replace the female body of its founder with a male head (Jagoe, 1994: 149). Halma is entirely absent from the discussions. When their conclusions are relayed to her, Galdós's narrator allows her to respond not through language, but only through the body: she cries (2002: 392). Likewise, when the mad-sane priest Nazarín counsels her to reject this trilogy of tyrants in favor of marriage, she is reported as responding not linguistically, but bodily, by suffocating, blushing (2002: 406), her hair standing on end, her eyes popping out of their sockets and, finally, by writhing on the floor (2002: 407): she therefore performs the forthcoming replacement of her role as director of Pedralba, defined in terms of language, with her future roles as wife and mother, defined in terms of the body. Catherine Jagoe, spurning earlier Galdós critics that saw Halma's marriage as freedom, interprets it as patriarchal control, with her bodily distress at Nazarín's sermon a final bid for feminist emancipation that takes that favored nineteenth-century form of female hysterical attack (1994: 150–151).[16]

Viridiana renders these literary devices of control in the film medium, and thus likewise reduces its female protagonist to an absent presence. Two sequences in particular betray the influence of the strategies outlined, one corresponding to each male protagonist. The first follows Viridiana's episode of sleepwalking. Interpreted through Galdós, it is especially clear that this scene reduces the female character to the body, as she sleepwalks in silence, while it associates the male character with the word, as, the next day, he is symbolic interpreter of her action of scattering ashes on his bed. Viridiana may timidly venture that "La ceniza quiere decir penitencia … y muerte" (Ashes mean penitence … and death), but it is for Jaime to finalize the interpretation: "la penitenica para ti, que vas a ser monja, y la

muerte para mi, por más viejo" (Penitence for you, who'll be a nun. Death for me, an old man), he pronounces.[17] The Galdós intertext is especially palpable in the second sequence owing to the casting of Francisco Rabal, who had previously played Nazarín in Buñuel's 1958 adaptation of that novel and in *Viridiana* plays Jorge. Following the beggars' orgy and rebellion, and following, too, the second physical assault on Viridiana in the form of the lame beggar's attempted rape, the former novice is symbolically silent, uttering not a word in sequences 26, 27, and 28. Jorge's irritating chatter, especially in the scene of Viridiana's acceptance of the *ménage à trois*, matches Nazarín's sermon to Halma in the novel, a link reinforced by the double-casting of Rabal. In *Viridiana* we may have silent submission, and in *Halma* a hysterical attack, but both women are symbolically denied language, and may represent only the body. Of course, in Buñuel's dark, post-Auschwitz vision of humanity (Fuentes, 2000: 158) this silencing is taken to violent extremes far from Galdós's world. Gone, in *Viridiana*, is the interesting equivocation of the unreliable literary narrator; in its place, we confront the horrifying misogyny of the two attempted rapes of Viridiana – silenced by drugs in Jaime's arms, and by a swoon in the beggar's.

If a reading of *Viridiana* through *Halma* makes us more sensitive to the controlling use of language, rereading, finally, *Halma* through *Viridiana* alerts us to the role of the body. As with *Misericordia*, this interpretation parallels the way Galdós criticism has moved from a reading of the novels that emphasizes the spirituality announced by Halma's name (*alma* means soul) to one that emphasizes materiality (a similar process has taken place regarding the ironically named named *Ángel Guerra*). Foregrounding physical desire in a reading of the novel emphasizes, first of all, misogyny. Halma's cousin, whom she has rescued from a life of ill repute, and who is her future husband and lord of Pedralba, entertains Pygmalion fantasies about her as he hangs about hopefully at her charitable institute: "en espíritu, no la separaba de sí; noche y día pensaba en ella, o se la imaginaba, transfigurándola a su antojo" (in his mind, he never left her side; night and day he thought about her, or imagined her, molding her according to his fancy) (2002: 381). Of course Buñuel's film almost takes the fantasy to its violent extreme, when Viridiana lies dressed and drugged by Jaime following the grotesque wedding. Secondly, an emphasis on the body also recasts the religion/science/capitalism debate and looks forward to the insights of psychoanalysis. The discussion about Halma between priest, doctor, and bailiff occurs while, the narrator tells us, Urrea furiously chops wood on the estate (2002: 386). At this point in the novel it is clear that the wayward cousin, who arrives at Pedralba uninvited, channels his sexual desire for Halma into physical agricultural work. As Galdós intimates here in the 1890s, Freud uncovers in the 1920s (for example in his 1923 *The Ego and the Id*), and Buñuel emphasizes in the 1960s, the unfettered desires of the body may cause the various ideological options explored through the religion/science/capitalism debate to collapse. In *Halma* this force of disruption is harnessed by channeling it into bourgeois marriage. In *Viridiana*, Jorge will not be shackled. Perhaps the enduring

fascination of the end of the film for many is that Jorge, played by Rabal – "Buñuel's dream of masculinity" (Evans, 1995: 94) – represents a male id untempered by the ego: trampling over moral, religious, monogamous, and class constraints, he enjoys unchecked access to both cousin and maid. Yet the potential of such ideological trampling to influence Spanish cinema in the 1960s was as apparent as it was impossible.

Galdós Adaptations in Spanish Cinema: Lost Opportunities

Given that *Viridiana* stages a rich intertextual dialogue between Spain's most famous nineteenth-century author and most celebrated twentieth-century director, the reader might be forgiven for assuming that the impact of Galdós on the national cinema has been extensive in terms of the number of adaptations, and far-reaching in terms of the influence of his playful prose on film form. I devote the final part of this chapter to explaining why, unfortunately, this is not the case. The "what if" argument I employ may be an interpretative tool of limited application, but, regarding the subject of Buñuel and Galdós, the approach throws a light on a number of dark corners of Spanish film history.

While working for Filmófono in the 1930s, Buñuel bought the rights to adapt both *Nazarín* and *Doña Perfecta* (1876) from Galdós's daughter (Fuentes, 2000: 141).[18] While he succeeded in filming the first in exile in Mexico in 1958, he never adapted the second. Fuentes has shown how *Doña Perfecta* nonetheless influences his other Mexican work, like *Los olvidados* and *El bruto* (The Brute, 1952), but Alejandro Galindo made the adaptation in 1950 (Fuentes, 2000: 141).[19] José Enrique Monterde, leading Spanish film historian and enthusiastic detractor of Spanish literary adaptations, bemoans the quality of the film versions of novels such as Rafael Gil's *La fe* (The Faith, 1947) and *La pródiga* (The Prodigal Woman, 1946) and José Luis Sáenz de Heredia's *El escándalo* (The Scandal, 1943) made in the 1940s in Spain (Monterde, 1989: 50). More recently, Spanish film scholars have offered a more sympathetic reading of these films, such as Labanyi, who has shown that their status as adaptations was used as a cover to smuggle interesting plots past the censors (1995: 7–8). Nonetheless, had Buñuel remained in Spain, what might his influence on Spanish literary adaptations, and specifically Galdós adaptations, have been? At the very least, the kind of influence that Galdós had, via Buñuel, on Mexican cinema of the 1950s might have applied to Spanish film.

A second missed opportunity concerns the potential influence of the kind of Galdós intertexts in *Viridiana* that this study has addressed, for the scandal unleashed by the film meant Spanish audiences could not see it for some 16 years.[20] The marvelous mishandling of *Viridiana* by the Franco regime must be one of the best stories in Spanish film history. Its highlights include the censors' objection to the original ending, in which Viridiana submits to her cousin, and Buñuel's

response to this by adding the maid to the scene, which transformed a relatively tame tale of sleazy seduction into a scandalous *ménage à trois*; and the regime's attempt to capitalize on Buñuel's international prestige by sending José Muñoz Fontán, Director General of Cinema, to collect the Golden Palm for the film at the Cannes festival,[21] only to sack him and ban the film when the Vatican's newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano*, objected to its blasphemy. Fun as it is to recall this bureaucratic bungling 50 years on, the *Viridiana* affair dealt a grave blow to the national industry. Its tangible effects may be measured in the area of production. First, UNINCI, headed by Juan Antonio Bardem and beacon of hope in the drab landscape of Spanish film production of the period, was shut down; thus Spain lost the projects the production company had on its books, like Bardem's *Crónica negra* (Black Chronicle) (which he was forced to make in Argentina as *Los inocentes* [The Innocents, 1961]) (Gubern, 1981: 167). Likewise, Pere Portobella's Films 59, which also participated in the production, was closed down. The loss of all the future projects these production companies might have financed leads us into the realm of speculation. Of course, only three years later, José María García Escudero would give, in theory, a boost to Spanish art film production through a new subsidy system, but in practice, this meant in some cases that producers like Ignacio Iquino took on art film projects only to get their hands on the subsidy. What, we may again only speculate, might a film like Mario Camus's *Los farsantes* (Frauds, 1963) have been if produced by the sympathetic UNINCI, rather than the opportunistic Iquino? Almost impossible to measure, also, are the intangible effects of the loss of *Viridiana*. Of course the Spanish creative and technical crews Buñuel used in the film continued to work in Spanish cinema post-1961; the problem was that audiences who were deprived of their work in Buñuel's film had no frame of reference. Thus the creative implications of casting Margarita Lozano, who had played the wayward Ramona, as a willful actress in *Los farsantes* were lost on audiences that did not know the earlier film. In terms of literary adaptations and Galdós, audiences and directors also lost the opportunity to enjoy the kind of intertexts discussed in this chapter. Shunning Galdós, directors of the 1960s art cinema movement the "Nuevo Cine Español" (New Spanish Cinema) favored the aesthetics models proposed by neorealism, while the "Escuela de Barcelona" (Barcelona School) turned to the aesthetic experimentation of contemporary New Cinema beyond Spain. When one New Spanish Cinema director, Angelino Fons, finally came to Galdós's *Fortunata y Jacinta* in 1969, the adaptation shows no evidence of the influence of Buñuel's exemplary use of the Galdós intertext in 1961.

Proof of the lost potential of *Viridiana* is the effect that *Tristana* had on the Spanish film industry some nine years later. Given the magnitude of the *Viridiana* scandal, it is astonishing that Buñuel would return to Franco's Spain in less than a decade, be welcomed by the authorities (Gubern, 1981: 235), and make, in his adaptation of Galdós's *Tristana*, a film that was even awarded official prizes and chosen to represent Spain at the Oscars. Such a volte-face can only be explained by the desperate politics of opportunism in force as Francoism entered its twilight.

The censored press, gagged with regard to any mention of *Viridiana*, was conversely allowed to celebrate *Tristana* (e.g., Munsó Cabús, 1971), while it won best Spanish picture of 1970 at the annual "Sindicato Nacional de Espectáculo" (National Performers' Guild) awards, with further prizes for actors Fernando Rey and Lola Gaos. In terms of the Spanish film industry, *Tristana* triggered a mini-boom of Galdós adaptations, plus versions of other nineteenth-century authors' work. Monterde dismisses these as a repetition of what he sees as the failed 1940s adaptations (1989: 50). However, paying attention to questions of gender and class in films such as *Fortunata y Jacinta* and *Tormento* (Torment, Olea, 1974) reveals the ways directors, actors, and scriptwriters deploy Galdós for trenchant, if tentative, political critique as Francoism faded.[22] Thus the third missed opportunity for Galdós and Spanish cinema is that Buñuel was not allowed to make *Tristana* immediately after *Viridiana* as he planned, which would have meant that the influence he had on the industry in the dying days of the dictatorship could have been embedded almost a decade sooner.

The grammatical tense of the past conditional that I have used to describe the three missed opportunities of Galdós's influence in Spanish cinema can only ever lead to ultimately futile speculations about what might have become of the national culture had the Civil War and dictatorship not taken place. To return, then, to the optimistic tense of the indicative, this chapter shows that a consideration of the Galdós intertexts in *Viridiana* shines new light on both director and novelist. Of course, the intertextual references in *Viridiana* must include pictorial art, as Buñuel works in a visual medium, hence the importance of da Vinci, Millet, and Dalí; they must include music, for film in the sound era is an audiovisual medium, hence the importance of the sacred pieces of Handel and Mozart; and they must include psychoanalysis, for Buñuel, never far from his Surrealist roots, is constantly concerned to map the workings of the human mind. The list may be endless, but this chapter has argued that, since novel and fiction film are both narrative forms, Galdós deserves a place high up on it. Published before psychoanalysis and Surrealism addressed the subjects, *Ángel Guerra* provides the inspiration for key strands of the film, like the studies of voyeurism, and desire and its prohibition, while *Misericordia* lends the director its portrayal of mendacity. A reading of the film through *Halma* points, furthermore, to its mechanisms of misogynistic control. In parallel, rereading the novels through Buñuel's work in the 1960s throws into relief aspects that Galdós critics have discovered more recently, especially the author's experimentation with narrative self-reflexivity; his preoccupation with questions of gender; and his attention to the material and the bodily.[23] *Viridiana* is a monument to the mutual illumination between literature and film, which proves that debt does not have to mean indebtedness, fidelity does not have to mean genuflection, and influence does not have to mean anxiety. If that sounds grand, the punning title of a recent work on the author brings us back to earth as it nicely sums up what we find in both novels and film: "Visions of Filth."[24]

Notes

1 The comment was made in a 1963 report that recommended the banning of *Tristana* at script stage – a recommendation that was accepted. The censor writes: "esta vez [Buñuel confiesa] que el origen del guión está en una novela de Galdós, que en el caso de *Viridiana* no se dijo, aunque aquella película esté tan inspirada en *Ángel Guerra*, si no más, que éste de ahora en *Tristana*" (this time [Buñuel confesses] that the origin of the script is in a Galdós novel, which in the case of *Viridiana* wasn't said, even though that film is just as inspired in *Ángel Guerra* as this present one is in *Tristana*, if not more so) (Marcelo Arreita-Jáuregui, quoted in Navarrete, 2003: 172). Buñuel went on to make *Tristana*, with the approval of the Franco authorities, in 1969.

2 My thanks to Karen for sending me a copy of her work.

3 Dudley Andrew (1999: 454). Too much critical time has been spent taxonomizing literary adaptations, which I have critiqued elsewhere (Faulkner, 2004: 5–6).

4 On Freud, see Peter Evans (1995); on Freud and Kristeva, Julián Daniel Gutiérrez-Albilla (2008); on cultural references, Vicente Sánchez-Biosca (1999: 35).

5 I take the word from André Bazin's 1952 "Pour un cinéma impur: défence de l'adaptation," which was translated as "In defense of mixed cinema" by Hugh Gray in 1967, but has been more recently rendered as "impure" by Timothy Barnard. Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelehan borrow the adjective for the title of their *Screen Adaptation: Impure Cinema* (2010) and discuss the translations on p. 130.

6 For instance, Freddy Buache (1973: 87–89) on *Nazarín* or Gwynne Edwards (1982: 225) on *Tristana*. In 2005, this last author acknowledges Galdós's "influence" on p. 4.

7 Stam, via Genette, proposes the alternative term "unmarked adaptations" (2005: 30). Either "found" or "unmarked" would describe Gubern's suggestion that *Viridiana* is an unacknowledged adaptation, discussed above.

8 Fredric Jameson, writing on Andrei Tarkovsky's adaptation (1972) of Stanislaw Lem's *Solaris* (1961), asks, "What about the situation in which [novel and film] really are of equal quality and merit?" and answers it with the warrior rhetoric of a "titanic struggle" and the "never-ending and unresolvable struggles for supremacy" between the two (2011: 218, 232). I favor the visual metaphor of "mutual illumination" over this masculinist imagery.

9 I use here Sánchez-Biosca's very useful breakdown of the film into 28 sequences (1999: 23–28). At least 12 of these reveal the Galdós intertext.

10 As Evans points out (2005: 102–203).

11 For which, see Evans (2005).

12 Such a passage confirms Lou Charnon-Deutsch's thesis of an implied male reader of female-focused Spanish realist novels (1990). See Sally Faulkner (2004: 88–108) for a development of this idea in relation to the two adaptations, one to film, one to television, of Galdós's *Fortunata y Jacinta* (1886–1887).

13 On Buñuel's insistence, as Lola Gaos recalls (1983: s.n.).

14 In fact, Halma's "name" is scarcely her own. As Jagoe points out, it "is conferred by men; it is a contraction of her first husband's title, used of her by the man who becomes her second husband" (1994: 141).

15 For Ruth Hoff, the three men stand for the more specific institutions of "the Church, the State, and the medical profession," who were all "interested in controlling

programmes designed to rehabilitate or improve the lives of the destitute during the 1890s," symbolized by Halma's charitable institute at Pedrabla (2006: 1078).

16 Hoff has challenged Jagoe's interpretation of *Halma* as a univocal, thesis novel, which lacks the irony of his earlier work (Jagoe, 1994: 141) by attending to the self-undermining equivocation of the narrator and to the details of the marriage between Halma and Urrea. Hoff argues that "What could pass for a conventional model of bourgeois marriage in this case is ultimately a proposal for a broader definition of marriage for public or social purposes" that allows Halma to retain some of her leadership (2006: 1083). I have argued elsewhere that Buñuel replaces Galdós's "Uncertainty" and "Ambiguity" with "Censure" and "Sabotage" with regard to *Nazarín* and *Tristana* (2004: 136, 148). In *Viridiana* too he sweeps aside the potential ironies and possible new readings Hoff identifies and favors the strident misogyny that Jagoe uncovers.

17 Evans notes the self-reflexivity of this act of interpretation (2005: 103), but I would stress that Jaime, rather than Viridiana, does the interpreting.

18 Edwards notes that he planned to film *Fortunata y Jacinta* at this stage too (1982: 82).

19 John Baxter recounts (1995: 206) that Buñuel persuaded Mexican producer Pancho Cabrera to buy the rights, though Buñuel ended up making *Nazarín* with Manuel Barbáchano Ponce as producer. Cabrera did produce *Doña Perfecta*, though it was directed by Galindro.

20 The first date when it could be seen in Spain was April 6, 1977, after Franco's death. Both appropriately and inappropriately, this was the same day that the Communist Party was legalized and was Easter Saturday. In 1982 the film was reassigned Spanish nationality.

21 Shared with *Une aussi longue absence* (The Long Absence, 1961).

22 For further detail see Faulkner (2004: 89–97) on *Fortunata y Jacinta* and (2012: 496–500) on *Tormento*.

23 See Jo Labanyi's summary of self-reflexive approaches mainly published in the 1980s, and feminist criticism, which has continued to flourish beyond her time of writing in 1993 (1993: 17–18). Labanyi's own subsequent *Gender and Modernization in the Spanish Realist Novel* in 2000 (2000b) was key in focusing attention on the material in the new millennium. My thanks to Rhian Davies for sharing her knowledge of Galdós criticism with me.

24 Fuentes Peris's book (2003) includes analysis of all three Galdós novels considered here.

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19

Spectral Cinema

Le Journal d'une femme de chambre

Kate Griffiths

To watch Buñuel's *Le Journal d'une femme de chambre* is to consort with a series of ghosts. Principal amongst them is the specter of the film's source text, a turn-of-the-century French novel by Octave Mirbeau (1848–1917), a novel in which metaphorical ghosts abound. Buñuel's film not only adapts many of the specters in Mirbeau's novel, it also evaluates the spectrality of cinematic adaptation itself. The film considers the way in which it renders absent the source text which it simultaneously brings to cinematic life. If Buñuel conceives of adaptation as a haunted act, his *Le Journal d'une femme de chambre* revels in its own spectrality. It is inhabited by the playfully phantomatic images of Buñuel's identity and output. It is teasingly peopled by the spectral memories of its actors' previous roles and by the ghostly presence of the necessarily absent viewer. If the opening lines of the *Communist Manifesto* (1848), a work so important to Surrealists such as André Breton (see Matthews, 1967), enunciates a notion of spectropolitics ("A spectre is haunting Europe – the spectre of Communism" [Marx, 1983: 203]), then Buñuel's *Le Journal d'une femme de chambre* explores what Helen Swift, writing in a different context, has called the "spectropoetics" at the heart of its own adaptive existence, the host of whispering ghostly voices from which it fashions its own artistic presence.[1] Ghosts, in Buñuel's *Le Journal d'une femme de chambre*, bring neither anxiety nor peril; rather, they are the key to the film's artistic life.

Cinema's relationship with ghosts has always been a close one. The Russian novelist Maxim Gorky, having seen projected moving images for the first time in July 1896, wrote: "If you only knew how strange it is to be here [to witness] not life, but its shadow …, not motion, but its soundless spectre" (cited in Grieveson and Krämer, 2007: 1). Mordaunt Hall, writing in the *New York Times* in April 1925 about *Madame sans gêne*, a piece depicting the French Revolution and the age of Napoleon, uses similarly haunted vocabulary, suggesting that "ghosts of the

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Napoleonic days seemed to come to life and tread once more the floors, staircases and lawns of the Chateaux of Fontainebleau and Compiegne" (cited in Grieveson and Krämer, 2007: 4). If cinema has always had its own ghosts, surrealist films are amongst the most spectral of the medium's output, cherishing, as so many of them do, the figure of phantom for the innate challenge it poses to the strictures of rationality. That ghosts are of great interest to Buñuel's corpus is made clear by *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* (The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie, 1972). A ghostly mother and her bloodstained lover return to beg their son for vengeance, a spectral policeman walks the corridors of his police station, and a sergeant confronts the phantoms of his mother and friends. While such ghosts appear to have no place in Buñuel's *Le Journal d'une femme de chambre*, a film which offers a stifling portrait of gritty social reality, the work ultimately proves to be amongst the most haunted of Buñuel's corpus in intertextual terms.

Theorists of intertextual relations have long had recourse to the vocabulary of ghosts. For Harold Bloom, in his seminal piece *The Anxiety of Influence* (1973), the specter of an earlier author is a constant source of angst as subsequent writers struggle to wrest a sense of their own originality and property from their textual forebears. Bloom writes that the strong dead return "in poems as in our lives; and they do not come back without darkening the living" (Bloom, 1997: 139). For Bloom the ghost of the author may only be laid to rest by radically rewriting his/her work (Bloom, 1997: 140). Far from seeking to suppress the ghostly voice of authors past, Jacques Derrida in *Spectres of Marx*, in stark contrast, urges us, as far as it is possible, "to speak *of* the spectre, to speak *to* the spectre, to speak with *it*, therefore most of all *to make or to let a spirit speak*" (Derrida, 1993: 32, emphasis in original, cited in translated form in Davis, 2007: 11). The value of such ghosts for Derrida lies in their status as figures hovering between life and death, presence and absence, defying the reliance of society and culture on binary oppositions. Such a figure is key to the necessary reconfiguration of debates on adaptation, an artistic process all too often approached in binary form as critics assess a source text in relation to a singular subsequent copy. Buñuel, far closer in his spectral thinking to Derrida than to Bloom, finds a clear sense of creative presence and originality by underlining what he inherits and borrows from a multitude of spaces, places, and identities. Buñuel makes no attempt to exorcise or rewrite radically the spectral sources of his work. Rather, he cultivates their ghostly voices, reveling in their profusion, encouraging his viewer to engage with their spectral whispers.

Mirbeau's novel is the most visible of the ghosts haunting Buñuel's film. The filmmaker's choice of author is a suitably spectral one. Mirbeau, a journalist, art critic, novelist, and playwright, was a towering figure of his era. His work was remarkable both for its volume and its controversial nature. The novelist's 1898 *Le Jardin des supplices* (The Torture Garden), a work Mirbeau dedicates to murder and blood, makes a case for the sadistic, sexual beauty of torture. The writer's public persona was no less controversial. From a position of considerable wealth in the establishment and having worked in his early career for the right-wing

press, Mirbeau penned works in support of the anarchist cause, writing specifically in defense of the anarchist Jean Grave. Moreover, a publically vocal anti-Semite, he subsequently intervened to protest against the anti-Semitic actions of the French government in the celebrated Dreyfus affair to which this chapter will return. However, Mirbeau's pronounced and contradictory presence in the cultural consciousness of his time faded quickly into spectral absence following his death. Enda McCaffrey writes, "In spite of his ubiquitous presence in the artistic and political arenas during the Third Republic, [Mirbeau] has been, for the most part, banished to the annals of history" (McCaffrey, 2000: 1). Individual works such as *Le Journal d'une femme de chambre*, the tale depicting the peregrinations of a beautiful servant between increasingly degenerate bourgeois households, were regularly reprinted in the twentieth century. However, the majority of his corpus passed and remained out of print for much of that period. While persuasive elements of a critical revival began toward the close of the twentieth century, Mirbeau remains little more than a ghost in the contemporary cultural consciousness.

The novelist's voice whispers spectrally throughout Buñuel's adaptation, for the filmmaker keeps much of the novel's dialogue, echoing Mirbeau's concept that words are uttered and endlessly recycled in the stasis of our social world. So too Buñuel keeps the novel's savage ideological attack on the bourgeoisie. Mirbeau's Célestine writes scathingly, in the diary which forms the basis of the novel, of the bourgeois households in which she has worked: "Those who only see humanity from the outside, and allow themselves to be dazzled by appearances, can have no idea of how filthy and corrupt the great world, 'high society', really is. It is no exaggeration to say that the main aim of its existence is to enjoy the filthiest kinds of amusement" (Mirbeau, 2001: 94).

Buñuel may alter the scenes and the decor, but the social outrages of Mirbeau's novel remain. The bourgeois master, in the novel, enjoys a prolonged sexual liaison with the cook, Marianne. She is a willing, if repulsive, participant in his infidelities. His cinematic equivalent, Monsieur Monteil, played by Michel Piccoli, orders a weeping and unwilling general servant of the same name into a chicken coop. His chosen site for sex speaks volumes as to her powerlessness to refuse. Her name, Marianne, evoking as it does the metaphorical female figurehead of the French Republic, offers ironic and horrific comment on the liberty of which that emblem has long been a symbol.

However, if Mirbeau's novel is present in Buñuel's adaptation, so too is it simultaneously absent as the director alters and removes aspects of his source text. Buñuel alters the very nature of the protagonist he adapts from Mirbeau. His Célestine, an impenetrable, calculating, and ultimately powerful character who sexually manipulates men is a far cry from her Mirbellian ancestor who writes in her diary: "They [men] only have to begin talking to me, the monsters, and directly I feel the warmth of their breath and the pricking of their beard on the back of my neck, it's no use. I just go as limp as a rag, and they can do what they like with me" (Mirbeau, 2001: 17). Mirbeau underlines the way in which memory

and the past sustain his protagonist: "I try to drown the ridiculous noise with the echo of my past happiness, passionately harking back to that past in order to create out of its scattered fragments the illusion that some future still awaits me" (Mirbeau, 2001: 102). Buñuel, by stark contrast, makes his heroine a character seemingly without memory. Célestine, played by Jeanne Moreau, moves to the Monteil household with just two links to the past which precedes the film: a consciousness which she never opens to her intra- or extratextual audience and a suitcase of photos which, although unpacked, remain symbolically turned away from the camera. If her literal past is blocked, her textual past is phantomatically obscured as Buñuel and his co-writer Jean-Claude Carrière mix the overlapping multiple strands of Mirbeau's plot lines as he follows Célestine's seemingly endless movements between households and topics in her diary. Buñuel and Carrière merge these chaotic strands into a linear, enclosed single narrative in the stifling confines of the Monteil household.

The ghostly status of Mirbeau's work in the images and dialogue of Buñuel's adaptation is mirrored by the unexpected profusion of specters in the novel itself. The text's focus may be the very material social reality of contemporary society, but metaphorical ghosts haunt its pages and descriptions. In the preface to his book cut for the English translation Mirbeau claims of the sociological works by Huret which inspired him, "they haunt me" (Mirbeau, 2006, my translation). Célestine sees three members of a household in which she used to work: "They were like three ancient corpses, lost in the maze of the cemetery and seeking their graves" (Mirbeau, 2001: 124). Servants are, she suggests, innately spectral as a result of the absence they represent in society's classificatory systems: "I just cannot get used to it, creeping about, 'walking on air', as Joseph says. Often, in these dark, cold passages, I feel like a ghost, a spectre" (Mirbeau, 2001: 130). Joseph, the powerful, corporeal manservant with his bull-like neck, is somehow spectral in his very solidity:

> He has a way of walking, with slow, gliding steps, that frightens me … you'd think he was dragging a weight chained to his ankles, or at least the memory of it … and suddenly he has disappeared … vanished into thin air. Before you can turn your head, he's just not there. Does he sink into the ground? Can he pass through walls? (Mirbeau, 2001: 136–138)

Célestine's memories, the recollections which sustain her just as Buñuel's recollections of Mirbeau sustain him artistically, are repeatedly conceived of as ghost-like. She thinks of the people in her past: "When I see them again, in imagination, they no longer strike me as being really alive, … they are no longer even ghosts. … merely dust and ashes …" (Mirbeau, 2001: 270). The ghosts of memory fade still further when one turns to grasp them in Mirbeau's novel.

This notion of something becoming nothing, of presence becoming absence, is key to Mirbeau's literary project for the writer sought, as Robert Ziegler puts it, to

create a "self-annihilating art work" (2007: 79), an art work whose production entails its simultaneous undoing. While such a mission is ultimately doomed to failure since Mirbeau's text will always be in some way present in the print of its prose even while attempting to make itself absent, the strategies by which Mirbeau's *Le Journal d'une femme de chambre* undoes itself are numerous. As Mirbeau's character Captain Mauger famously eats any creature with which he comes into contact, his creator's novel consumes, reuses, and leads the reader back to any number of very recognizable earlier sources in his patchwork text. In the first instance, Mirbeau adapts from his own work. Ziegler writes: "Accustomed to cannibalizing earlier works, Mirbeau recycled old anecdotes, confecting novels that often 'redisaient les mêmes histoires' [retold the same stories]" (2007: 111). The scene, for example, which takes place in Madame Paulhat-Durand's employment agency between a maid looking for work and her cruel potential employers first appeared as a short story in 1895. Writing on the three novels Mirbeau published between 1900 and 1907, a set which includes *Le Journal d'une femme de chambre*, Reg Carr suggests, "[they] read more or less like what they are, collections of newspaper articles strung together, with varying degrees of success, on a slender fictional thread" (Carr, 1977: 134). Mirbeau's novel also adapts the reality of its creator and contemporary history in the form of the Dreyfus affair. This *cause célèbre* in which Mirbeau intervened, championing the much-attacked Jew Dreyfus as he was falsely accused of passing military secrets to the Prussians, features prominently in the work. The first 16 chapters are set in the time when the trial was in the process of revision (see Derfler, 2002). McCaffrey writes: "virtually the whole diary captures the mood of a town during a national crisis" (2000: 105). Various characters are set up as potential false witnesses in the trial against Dreyfus, and Joseph, the anti-Semitic servant, is virulent in his hatred of Dreyfus's defenders, defenders amongst whom his creator must be counted.[2] Mirbeau too adapts his own life, including his erstwhile friend Paul Bourget as a character ultimately loathed by Célestine.[3] Mirbeau initially shared Bourget's right-wing allegiances before moving toward anarchism, a move which transformed Bourget into one of his favorite whipping boys in fiction. Mirbeau's novel undoes itself as a fixed point of origin by pointing back to the sources from which it has fashioned its existence.

Origins prove as shifting and receding at the level of Mirbeau's plot. Célestine, thanks to the candor of her diary, may appear to be an open book, a tangible presence in our reading consciousness, but she too proves spectrally elusive. As Mirbeau adapts his own work, reality, and life to create his fiction, Célestine adapts the clothes, mannerisms, and identities of her employers to fashion a persona which, though ubiquitous, is haunted by a central and unavoidable absence. Her act of theft is, Ziegler suggests, double: "Célestine fashions a new self from the debris of obsolete personas. This patchwork identity is reproduced and objectified on paper, in a diary assembled from stationery stolen from different women" (Ziegler, 2007: 145–146). That Célestine is a mirror is clear – men seduce her to grasp an aspect of the mistress she serves. She writes: "When men fall for us, it is partly our mistresses,



Figure 19.1 Buñuel's foot fetishist seeks power over absence and lack in *Le Journal d'une femme de chambre*. Ciné-Alliance, Filmsonor, Spéva Films, and Dear Film Produzione.

and even more their mystery, that they are in love with" (Mirbeau, 2001: 16). She is, however, a blocked mirror as Mirbeau bars her identity from us. Just as the truth about Clara's murder (the character renamed Claire in Buñuel's adaptation) is never found in Mirbeau's novel, neither is the origin and materiality of Célestine's own identity as the character continues her imitative performance of the bourgeoisie to the novel's close. Mirbeau's heroine remains as closed to the reader as the scandalous box her mistress carries locked through customs. We presume, from the custom officer's reaction, that the box contains sex toys, themselves replicas of replicatory objects, but we are not allowed to see the contents of the box: "'For Christ's sake!' he swore. Then controlling his amazement, he exclaimed cheerfully: 'Why on earth couldn't you have told me in the first place … If I'd known you were a widow…'" (Mirbeau, 2001: 90). Célestine, ever-present in our reading experience, is simultaneously spectrally barred, a replica of so many earlier replicas.

Unlike the boot fetishist, the elderly bourgeois M. Rabour, who graces both his images and Mirbeau's pages, Buñuel does not seek fetishistic power over the absence and lack that is Mirbeau's text in his adaptation (Figure 19.1). Ziegler, who reads Rabour as a "textbook example of a fetishist driven by mutilation anxiety" (Ziegler, 2007: 136), suggests that the diary serves as a fetish for Mirbeau's Célestine, allowing her to combat the loss and lack of her life in a single object.[4] Buñuel embraces both the absences at the heart of Mirbeau's novel and those innate in the adaptive act itself. Mirbeau's text perforates the dialogue by which it lives with a series of ellipses that visually puncture the narrative. Such narrative holes, instances of textual destruction, mimic the social destruction the anarchist movement seeks to inflict on society. Célestine writes early in the novel:

> We had to walk right through the village … Not exactly exciting: nothing like the Boulevard Malesherbes. Dirty, winding narrow streets, houses that look as though

> they're about to fall down, dark houses with rotten old beams and high gables, with the upper storeys bulging like in the old days … And the people you see … ugly, so ugly! I didn't set eyes on a single decent looking fellow. (Mirbeau, 2001: 48)

Buñuel translates such absences into visual form. His film opens and closes with scenes internally fractured by a series of abrupt jump cuts in what is for the characters involved a single, continuous experience. Célestine contemplates the landscape from the window of the train in the film's first moments, losing herself in its flow and continuity. Buñuel, in a manner reminiscent of Godard's *À bout de souffle* (Breathless, 1960), refuses the viewer any such sense of flow and continuity. He cuts, with no attempt to soften his transitions, holes in the continuity of the audience's viewing experience, jolting them through abbreviated fragments of the panorama without changing the subject of the camera's focus. A comparable attempt to offer not flow but narrative fragmentation is palpable in the film's closing vision of a right-wing political protest. Buñuel cuts and splices the protesting procession, fragmenting both its flow and that of the audience's viewing experience as he italicizes the holes and the cuts of his cinematic offering. The film fissures itself visually in other ways. The director's playful interest in scene transitions is clear. In a match cut Buñuel moves from the sexually frustrated husband (Piccoli) walking away from the camera to his wife, the source of that sexual frustration, walking toward the camera. The symmetry of the shot offers mocking comment on the palpable disunity of their marriage. Fades to black are relatively rare as Buñuel moves between scenes in *Le Journal d'une femme de chambre*. However, Buñuel manipulates this rarity to ensure maximum impact for the few fades to black he does use. They appear after defining, often horrific, moments which effectively fracture the narrative, most notably Claire's murder, Joseph's claim to Célestine that they are kindred spirits, Célestine's betrayal to the police of Joseph, and her marriage to Mauger. While this marriage advances Célestine socially, Buñuel, in the brief glimpse he allows us of her marriage, depicts his married heroine in as domineering and frigid a pose as the former mistress, the sterility of whose marriage she has now emulated (Figure 19.2). Buñuel, moreover, embraces lack in his exploration of Célestine herself, making her still more of an absence than she was in Mirbeau's novel. While Buñuel's Célestine is the focus of all gazes and most desires, they neither capture nor decipher her. They cannot, for she is innately ghost-like. She passes through the film with access to all areas. Ever moving, she sees and knows all. And her absence is only magnified by that of her self-proclaimed kindred spirit Joseph. Whereas Mirbeau refused to confirm Joseph's guilt, offering only a list of potential murder suspects, Buñuel shows us Joseph chasing Claire before her death and the horrific outcome of his actions. Joseph's actions in Buñuel's piece still, though, remain inexplicable. Buñuel's Joseph states: "Go ahead, snoop through everything … Even in here [his head]. You won't find a thing." Both he and his motivations are as ghostly as the woman he desires, a fact again signaled by Buñuel's use of scene transitions. A policeman walks straight at



Figure 19.2 Célestine's subsequent marriage is as blocked as that of her previous masters in *Le Journal d'une femme de chambre*. Ciné-Alliance, Filmsonor, Spéva Films, and Dear Film Produzione.

the camera in *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie*. His body, as it reaches the camera, dissolves into the ghostly tale of the spectral sergeant who haunts the police station. Comparably Joseph's body dissolves in *Le Journal d'une femme de chambre* in a scene transition as he walks to Célestine and his room. The camera moves through his body to change moment and focus, highlighting his physical presence as matter insubstantial in its very tangibility.

Buñuel's replication of the gaps and blanks of Mirbeau's text serves both to recreate the detail of his source and to comment on the absences innate in the adaptive act. That Buñuel's *Le Journal d'une femme de chambre* adopts something of a meta-adaptive stance, undoing itself even as it makes itself, is underlined by its exploration of replication as a key narrative strand. While replication is a theme of the novel (Célestine repeatedly points out the unchanging nature of her experiences in apparently different contexts), it takes on extra resonance in Buñuel's adaptation which repeats, in altered form, an earlier source. Replication is, Buñuel suggests, an inevitable phenomenon in life. Célestine mocks her mistress, mimicking her words as she asks her to take care with an apparently expensive and rare lamp. Her act of replication is unwittingly double. She not only echoes the words of her predecessors in the job as they mock their mistress (the cook states "they all say that, but you'll stay"), her copied words also anticipate the fact that she will emulate the fate of the mistress she mimics. She too will be unhappily married to a bourgeois man in a relationship from which she derives no sexual pleasure. Joseph may proclaim that no other woman on earth will do as his wife in the café, but in Buñuel's film everything is both replaceable and replaced. Replication may be inevitable but it is, according to Buñuel's broader corpus, often horrific. Tristana, speaking of columns and objects in the 1970 film of the same name, claims "No two … are alike. There is always a difference." Her claims are mocked as she

chooses between two comparable roads, one of which leads to a rabid dog and the other to its metaphorical counterpart, the lustful Don Lope. A male character, Harry, in *Le Fantôme de la liberté* (The Phantom of Liberty, 1974), deems symmetry distasteful, a notion perhaps cultivated by *Le Journal d'une femme de chambre*. Monsieur Monteil attempts unsuccessfully to seduce the savvy Célestine in the following words: "I'm all for love, Célestine, mad love." His words, which adapt those of the source novel ("I'm all for people amusing themselves. I believe in love!" Mirbeau, 2001: 66) are doubly grotesque. Not only do they echo the Surrealists' fascination with "mad love" (see, inter alia, Breton, 1987) as epitomized by *Wuthering Heights* (1847),[5] an echo made entirely inappropriate by its vocalization in the mouth of an opportunistic bourgeois sex pest, they are also repeated in his brutal seduction of the unwilling Marianne. With no other available female upon whom to cast his eye, Monteil cursorily replicates his words of seduction, this time omitting even Marianne's name, so unimportant is her identity or her acquiescence to his sexual satisfaction: "I'm all for love. Mad love." The ghosts of Monteil's endless seductions of partners willing and unwilling, facelessly haunt the words he repeats seemingly ceaselessly in an attempt to find sexual pleasure.

Buñuel's *Le Journal d'une femme de chambre* not only repeats itself, haunted as it is by the ghosts of its own replication; so too does it repeat and rehearse what Peter William Evans calls "the range of [Buñuel's] many familiar, complex and iconoclastic obsessions," testifying to the trace of his identity in the film's images (Evans, 1995: 2). Buñuel writes of this spectral presence: "I make a film for a regular audience and also for friends, for those who will understand such-and-such a reference that is more or less obscure to others" (Krohn and Duncan, 2005: 126). The action of the book, a novel Buñuel read in his youth, is updated in the adaptation to the era and closed society of that youth. Buñuel's words on his home town Calanda apply, without alteration, to both the social world he depicts in *Le Journal d'une femme de chambre* and that of Mirbeau's original novel: "It was a closed and isolated society, with clear and unchanging distinctions among the classes. The respectful subordination of the peasants to the big landowners was deeply rooted in tradition, and seemed unchangeable. Life unfolded in a linear fashion" (Buñuel, 1985: 8). The film testifies to the many recurring interests of the director: animal and insect shots are frequent in this film made by a man who had wanted to be an entomologist (the foot fetishist shoots a butterfly and a wild boar allegorizes Joseph's abuse of Claire).[6] Such images, absent in Mirbeau, underline, in the words of Carrière, "what the author or authors of the film can add to a book" (Buñuel, 2006). That Buñuel adds the ghost of himself to the book in his film is made clear by the film's denouement. His film closes with a right-wing march against the government, presumably that historically triggered when Edouard Daladier recalled the Prefect of Police, Jean Chiappe, from post. Protesters take up the cry "Vive Chiappe!" from Buñuel's hideous Joseph, a cry which serves as personal and ironic payback from Buñuel for Chiappe's role in banning the Buñuel/Dalí film *L'Âge d'or* (The Golden Age, 1930). Buñuel's film is creatively haunted by the personal memories of its director.

Other authorial ghosts haunt the images and words of *Le Journal d'une femme de chambre*, for the script was one Buñuel co-wrote with Carrière, a screenwriter with whom he would subsequently work until the end of his career. Carrière's presence is simultaneously tangible in the insect images which reflect the entomological interests of Buñuel. Carrière had worked on just two films when he met Buñuel, one of which was a work on the sexual life of animals (*Bestiaire d'amour*, 1963), a work he signals as the reason Buñuel chose him over his competitors.[7] Moreover, Carrière makes a telling cameo appearance as the village priest who forbids Monsieur Monteil sexual satisfaction at the hands of his wife. Standing in the street by a sign marked "rue barrée" (road closed), the adaptation bars and closes the priest's/Carrière's speech, drowning out his words as he attempts to speak to Rose, Mauger's servant. The humor of these barred/closed words is double. First, the film indicates by means of words (those on the sign) what cannot be said, creating another signifying blank in Buñuel's adaptation. Second, the character whose words are deemed to fail, the character who, to this point, has only managed platitudes and empty doctrine, is, as the adaptation's scriptwriter, the source of all words in this adaptation. The film's stifling of his dialogue functions as a comic conceit indicating both the cinematic life which springs from his mouth and the innately borrowed, problematic nature of that cinematic life.

Actors too bring their own ghosts to the screen. Buñuel's *Le Journal d'une femme de chambre* is in many ways haunted by the past roles of those performing within it. The shuttered impassivity of Jeanne Moreau's Célestine might tempt viewers to interpret her performance through the prism of the actress's previous roles. Moreau was, by the time of the release of *Le Journal d'une femme de chambre*, "a star whose meaning was already associated with transgression, self-conscious sexuality and independence. Her appearance in films like *Les Amants* (The Lovers, 1959), *Jules et Jim* (Jules and Jim, 1962) and *La Notte* (The Night, 1961) express a sensuality whose force emerges as much from cerebral allure as from blatant carnality" (Evans, 1995: 140). The blind thoughtlessness that is Mirbeau's heroine (she does read comparatively extensively, but her actions are instinctive and often unreflective) is rewritten in part by the ghostly authorship of Moreau's past roles as Célestine's passion becomes the carefully marshaled motor of the cerebral strategies and investigations of Buñuel's heroine. The ghosts of Michel Piccoli, one of Buñuel's key actors, mock rather than reinforce his role in *Le Journal d'une femme de chambre*.[8] Piccoli is, in this era, repeatedly cast as a ruthless predator, a successful manipulator who brings those around him to their knees. He played such a part in Roger Vadim's *La Curée* (The Game is Over, 1966). His stereotypical role is also reprised when he plays Dom Juan in Marcel Bluwal's téléfilm *Dom Juan ou le festin de pierre* (1965), the perverse Henri Husson in Buñuel's *Belle de jour* (1967), the Marquis de Sade himself in Buñuel's *La Voie lactée* (The Milky Way, 1969), and the licentious minister in *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie*. Such roles find an ironic echo in *Le Journal d'une femme de chambre* as Piccoli plays Monsieur Monteil, a man with an energy and a potency comparable with that of Piccoli's contemporary

roles, a man unable to dispense them as a result of the bourgeois constraints in which he lives. A comparable spectrality may be discerned in the adaptation of Mirbeau's novel which preceded that of Buñuel. Jean Renoir, a filmmaker whose prewar output Buñuel admired, adapted Mirbeau's novel for Hollywood in 1946, creating a version, Katherine Golsan suggests, which is haunted. Such is Renoir's artistic license that Mirbeau's presence is a mere trace in this adaptation. Renoir's Célestine finds true love, her emotion curing a sick lover. The murderous Joseph is killed by a patriotic parade which then comes to sing its patriotic values to the static, sanitized bourgeois house, a space in which no boot fetishism features, the owner's only sins a cruel possessiveness and lack of social conscience. Golsan writes in spectral terms of the ghostly pasts of Renoir's actors, pasts which haunt and shape the present of the director's screen:

> The actors retain uncanny echoes of their former roles. Judith Anderson, as Madame Lanlaire [Buñuel's Monteil] recalls Mrs Danvers in *Rebecca*, as she walks the halls and eerily appears out of no where to … impose her will upon the cowed household. Paulette Goddard as the maid Céleste, ever the Chaplinesque ingénue, balances a cake through the twists and turns of her mistress' whims, and Francis Ledover, as Joseph, has the ominous demeanour of his earlier role as Mack the Knife in Pabst's *Loulou*. (Golsan, 2008: 46)

Actors and the spectral memories they trigger in the minds of the viewing public in some ways spectrally author the parts they play in *Le Journal d'une femme de chambre*.

The position of the viewer, moreover, has something of the spectral to it in Buñuel's film. The camera drifts through walls, taking the viewer with it. Madame Monteil bars everyone from her bathroom, even Célestine, yet we gain access to her inner sanctum. We pass through locked doors. Characters hammer on the door of the rooms of the boot fetishist Monsieur Rabour, fearing the death which has indeed befallen him. From inside the quarters, having surveyed the fetishist's contorted body, we listen to their violent attempts to gain entry via the walls and locked door through which we drifted spectrally.[9] Our gaze is perhaps the most potent of the many hidden viewers which, already rife in Mirbeau's novel, are even more frequent in Buñuel's film. In Mirbeau's text, Célestine is spied on by her mistresses, and the Lanlaires (Mirbeau's equivalent of the Monteils) build a spy shelter in their garden to ward off the machinations of Mauger: "Next day, Monsieur Lanlaire installed two permanent witnesses in the garden, behind a kind of wooden screen with holes cut in it so that they could watch what was going on" (Mirbeau, 2001: 171). Buñuel, fascinated by acts of looking, hidden and overt, peoples his film with hidden viewers, viewers who echo our own status as audience, metaphorizing and bringing us into the action.[10] Célestine's arrival at the Monteil house is watched by Monsieur Rabours in the bushes and the film's layers of vision are triple as we spy on Monsieur Rabours spying on Célestine.[11] The camera follows Claire through the forest like a hidden person, the tree trunks barring the screen and drawing attention

to the camera's stalking presence in a perspective attributable to no one in a manner which belies the following claim from Buñuel: "I always try to avoid reminding the viewer that there is a camera" (cited in Krohn and Duncan, 2005: 73). Buñuel's hidden viewers not only testify to Célestine's entrapment in a system of very different controlling gazes, they also gesture toward our own gaze as viewer, to our necessary spectral presence to the action in which we do not feature.

Our spectral freedom in Buñuel's film though is not total. Buñuel, as the title of his film *Le Fantôme de la liberté* indicates, does not believe in that possibility. He writes: "Liberty is a phantom. I've thought about that sincerely and I believe it. Freedom is no more than a ghost of mist. Man can seek it out, even believe he has grasped it … and in the end he is left with only fleeting bits of mist in his hands" (cited in Krohn and Duncan, 2005: 11). Ultimately the viewer is as trapped in the film as its characters. Entrapment is a key theme of Mirbeau's novel as Célestine feels the walls of the social world in which she lives closing in on her: "The Priory filled me with a sense of discouragement. Its great lawns without a single-flowerbed, and that huge building looking like a barracks or a prison, where an eye seemed to be spying upon you behind every window" (Mirbeau, 2001: 55). Entrapment is equally prevalent as a trope in Buñuel's adaptation. In this cinematic world there are frequent shots from behind the bars of the estate's gates, through windows or internal serving hatches, offering images which are frequently barred or blocked in some sense. Célestine talks with Marianne and a bed divides them even in their private quarters. Madame Monteil asks her sex-starved husband what he wants when he enters her bedroom. The empty bed between them, the bed which is barred to him, provides the humorously unspoken answer to her question. Neighbors argue or pass the time of day with the high garden wall between them (Figure 19.3). Shots are also frequently socially constrained or barred. The bourgeoisie are frequently filmed in low-angle shots which tilt up to underline



Figure 19.3 Buñuel blocks specific scenes and social interactions in *Le Journal d'une femme de chambre*. Ciné-Alliance, Filmsonor, Spéva Films, and Dear Film Produzione.

their subjects' social elevation. In contrast, the shots of the servants' dining table tilt down to depict these socially inferior beings. Joseph and Célestine offer the only exceptions to this phenomenon as they feature in low-angle shots which monumentalize them briefly for, in very different ways, they fleetingly challenge the social laws that constrain them. The ephemeral nature of this social challenge is clear, as the deceptive breadth of the film's opening sequence underlines. Despite being filmed in wide screen as if to imply that Célestine will find space and freedom after the constraints of urban living, the brave new world which the protagonist now enters is as closed and stifling as that she has left behind (see Evans, 1995: 138). Characters are not merely socially and spatially trapped, they are also temporally enclosed. Célestine, having challenged the bourgeoisie, becomes part of it, dressing Marianne in her old clothes as she orders around her affection-starved new husband in the pose and prose of her former mistress, a mistress now absent. The bourgeoisie's power, Buñuel makes clear, stems from its power to replicate itself endlessly, absorbing those who would alter it. Célestine's entrapment mirrors our own, as viewers of Buñuel's films more generally. While Buñuel denies us access to Célestine, he overdetermines our reactions to Joseph by means of emphatic camerawork and *mise en scène*, trapping us in a fixed response to the character, a response in which there appears little room for maneuver. Joseph's murder of Claire is accompanied by an image of marauding wild boar running through the woods as Joseph does, and an image of a frightened rabbit running for safety. Such overdetermined images are not the preserve of *Le Journal d'une femme de chambre*. They appear also in the film with which it has close links, *Cet obscur objet du désir* (That Obscure Object of Desire, 1977). Conchita, like Célestine, is a young, beautiful chambermaid, an outsider lusted after by an older, richer man upon entering his household in an introductory dialogue almost identical to that which takes place between Célestine and Monsieur Monteil. Train sequences follow both the scene in which Conchita dismisses a restaurant owner who refused to serve her and that in which she is discovered to have cuckolded Mathieu in his own home by housing a man in her room. Her status as the driving force in both Mathieu's life and the film is made only too clear by the wheel-level shots of the train's locomotion which detail the mechanisms of its power and the high-angle shots of its velocity which juxtapose with her image. Heavily determined images and metaphors defining Conchita's identity litter the adaptation, predetermining audience response to her. That these responses are usually contradictory (Conchita as scheming whore, Conchita as childlike innocent) does nothing to detract from our entrapment as viewer at Buñuel's hands.

Buñuel's *Le Journal d'une femme de chambre* is peopled by specters. The film considers the ghostly nature of its own undertaking. It assesses the impossibilities of the adaptive act, the gaps and fissures which necessarily introduce themselves as the film simultaneously makes present that which it renders absent from itself: Mirbeau's source novel. The film finds artistic life by testifying to its artistic impossibilities. Buñuel, unlike the model proposed by theorists such as Harold Bloom,

seeks not to exorcise the ghostly voices in his work or to wrest from them a sense of his own textual property, rather, à la Derrida, he revels in the ghostly whispers peopling his artistic voice, encouraging his viewer to hear and locate them. Like Horatio, Shakespeare's scholar in *Hamlet*, Buñuel talks to the ghosts of his film. Such ghosts take a multitude of shifting forms, haunted as *Le Journal d'une femme de chambre* is by the specters of Buñuel's own obsessions, artistic identity, and *oeuvre*. So too is it peopled by the specters of its actors' past lives, specters which simultaneously reinforce and jar Buñuel's current characterization. Buñuel even addresses the specter of the viewer him/herself, addressing our present absence or absent presence in his film's images. Commerce with ghosts, Buñuel's *Le Journal d'une femme de chambre* makes clear, brings not artistic death or spectral anxiety, but rather opens the director's cinematic voice to the full resonance of its hauntings.

Notes

1 Swift coins the term "spectropoetics" whilst assessing the influence of earlier authors on writers in the late medieval *querelle des femmes* (Swift, 2009: 29–42).

2 Célestine writes, "As to that monster Dreyfus, he'd better not think of returning to France from Devil's Island. Oh no, indeed! And if there's any chance of that swine Zola coming to lecture at Louvriers, as has been rumoured, the sooner he changes his mind the better for him. They would soon settle his hash, Joseph would see to that" (Mirbeau, 2001: 96).

3 "It was there that I met Monsieur Paul Bourget, at the height of his fame – need I say more? … He is precisely the kind of philosophizing, poeticizing, moralizing writer that suits the pretentious nullity, the intellectual snobbery, the fundamental untruth of that social stratum for whom everything is artificial" (Mirbeau, 2001: 297–298).

4 "Célestine's diary becomes itself a kind of fetish, masking the writer's awareness of her professional subordination, enabling her to disavow her powerlessness and shame" (Ziegler, 2007: 137).

5 Buñuel himself made a version of this novel during his time in Mexico, *Abismos de passion,* aka *Cumbres borrascosas* (Wuthering Heights, 1954).

6 Buñuel claimed, "I'm passionate about insects. You can find all of Shakespeare and de Sade in the lives of insects" (Krohn and Duncan, 2005: 10).

7 See Carrière's introduction to *The Diary of a Chambermaid* on the 2006 DVD distributed by Optimum Releasing Ltd.

8 Buñuel's affection for Piccoli is clear. He writes in his memoirs of his film *La Mort en ce jardin* (Death in the Garden, aka The Diamond Hunters, 1956), "it was thanks to this anomalous film that I met Michel Piccoli, with whom I've made several films and who has become one of my closest friends. I love and admire him for his unfailing sense of humour, his generosity, his whimsy, and the respect he never shows me" (Buñuel, 1985: 215).

9 The ghost of the viewer passes through the borders and boundaries not only of *Le Journal d'une femme de chambre* but indeed of Buñuel's corpus more generally. In *Tristana*, as Don Lope and Tristana enter the bedroom, the door is abruptly shut on the camera. By means of a scene transition, the camera enters the room nonetheless and Lope addresses ostensibly the dog, but simultaneously the camera: "What are you doing here …? Go!" Both dog and camera obey, leaving Lope and the room.

10 Writing of the bathing cabanas in San Sebastian in *My Last Breath*, Buñuel recalls, "These cabanas were divided by partitions, and it was easy to enter one side, make a peephole in the wood and watch the woman undressing the other side. Unfortunately, long hat pins were in fashion, and once women realised they were being spied upon, they would thrust their hat pins in to the holes" (Buñuel, 1985: 15). Remembering his cousin's house which was adjacent to a cinema, he recalls how "we managed to dig a small hole in the bricks, where we took turns watching soundless moving pictures" (Buñuel, 1985: 32).

11 Such an act of triple voyeurism is not unique to *Le Journal d'une femme de chambre*. In *Cet obscur objet du désir* (That Obscure Object of Desire, 1977) Conchita performs a naked flamenco performance for at least three desiring gazes: the tourists in the private room who pay for the dance, her would-be lover (played by Fernando Rey), and the camera itself.

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20

Between God and the Machine

Buñuel's Cine-Miracles

Libby Saxton

In an interview conducted in the 1970s, Luis Buñuel describes cinema elliptically as "a machine that manufactures miracles" (Pérez Turrent and de la Colina, 1993: 190). Some of his films seem to support this claim quite literally by dramatizing divine interventions. But why should miracles matter to Buñuel, a self-proclaimed apostate and dialectical materialist? Although miracles were a popular object of critique amongst Enlightenment thinkers, in contemporary discussions the topic tends to provoke embarrassment (Santner, 2005: 77); it is generally assumed to hold "little to no intellectual attraction" and imply a "regression into obscurantism" (McGee, 2010: 838; Žižek, 1999: 142). The miracles that apparently occur in Buñuel's films have usually been interpreted as evidence of his preoccupation with the inexplicable or nonrational (see, for example, de Ros, 2004). They are viewed either as surrealist elements or as reflecting his ambivalence toward orthodox religion in general and the Spanish Catholic Church in particular, which is indicted in his films for its historical complicity with the bourgeoisie and, most damningly, with Francoism. In this chapter, I want to draw attention to links between miracles and machines that are also forged in his work but that have seldom attracted critical comment. This shadowing of miracles by what might initially seem alien, threatening, or even diametrically opposed to them provides a clue, I suggest, to the lingering fascination they hold for Buñuel.

The first part of this chapter situates Buñuel's work in relation to a concern with miracles and technology which is traceable through three otherwise disparate groups of texts: discussions of early cinema, surrealist writings, and poststructuralist considerations of religion in the digital era. The remaining sections focus on *Simón del desierto* (Simon of the Desert, 1965) and *La Voie lactée* (The Milky Way, 1969), Buñuel's most sustained and probing explorations of the miracle theme. Previous analyses of these films' ambiguous representations of faith have tended to overlook their twin yet less overtly asserted concern with mechanical illusions,

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scientific knowledge, and technical innovation, which is discernable in spite of the director's mistrust of rationalism and declared indifference toward science (Buñuel, 1983: 174). Notwithstanding the etymological bond between miracles and laughter, Buñuel's miracles deserve to be taken seriously, I argue, because they challenge the traditional antinomies between religion and science, theology and technology, the supernatural and the mechanical.[1]

Miracles between Religion and Science

A canonical reference point in Western philosophical discussions of miracles is Hume's eighteenth-century critique of the grounds for belief in them. In *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding* (1748), Hume defines the miracle as "a transgression of a law of nature by a particular volition of the Deity, or by the interposition of some invisible agent" (Hume, 1975: 115). Examining the extent to which Christianity depends on eyewitness reports of miracles for validation, Hume contends that "no human testimony can have such force as to prove a miracle, and make it a just foundation for any such system of religion" (1975: 127). Miracles by definition are incompatible with the shared norms of rationality based on experience against which, for Hume, testimony should be judged. Hume's skeptical empiricist argument provides a useful starting place for thinking, with Buñuel, about the relationship between miracles and film. There are several obvious loose affinities between these two phenomena. First, both need an audience or witness. Second, both are the product of hidden causal forces. An analogy can be drawn between Hume's "invisible agent" and the attempt to conceal the constructed nature of the diegetic illusion which characterizes historically dominant modes of filmmaking such as the classical Hollywood cinema with its "invisible" system of continuity. Third, cinema is able to suspend the laws of time and space, just as miracles do in Hume's account. As Elza Adamowicz notes, this capacity led the Surrealists to embrace film as a particularly well-equipped medium for exploring dreams (see Adamowicz, 2010: 26), but filmic spatiotemporality can also be manipulated for the purpose of investigating material reality. Buñuel remarks of the medium's thaumaturgical, or wonder-working, powers: "Thanks to cinema, we can see an actor who died fifty years ago now, or how a seed germinates and grows into a plant, or how a bullet leaves a gun barrel and strikes an urn, whose fragments settle to the ground with the grace of a dancer" (Pérez Turrent and de la Colina, 1993: 190). Finally, film, like miracles, has historically been linked to the act of witnessing; it has been embraced for its perceived capacity to supply evidence of events by capturing an indexical imprint of them. Hume's suspicion of miracle testimonies resonates with the critique of the film image's promise of authenticity that is undertaken, as I will argue later, in *Simón del desierto* and *La Voie lactée*. However, whereas Hume endeavors to separate the miracle from reason and scientific knowledge, Buñuel's conception of cinema as a

miracle-making machine complicates such an opposition, suggesting that religion and technology cannot be straightforwardly disentangled.

Buñuel's parallel between film and miracles was, of course, not new. The nineteenth-century visual devices which foreshadowed cinema's birth invested the much older concept of miracle technologies with fresh currency. Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre's dioramas, for example, were known as "Miracle Rooms" due to their awe-inspiring illusionism, and photography was subsequently heralded in turn as "the new optical miracle" (Sternberger, 1977: 9; Jay, 1993: 125). References to the phenomenon persist in discussions of the first projected moving images. Stanley Corkin, for instance, suggests that the new medium "miraculously presented visions from another time and place as if they were occurring before the viewer's eyes. … The late nineteenth-century spectacle of the cinema machine at work endowed even the most ordinary street scenes with an element of wonder" (Corkin, 1995: 61–62). Such allusions to thaumaturgy, both popular and scholarly, mark a renewed respect for etymology and invoke a tradition of thought in which the miracle has nothing to do with the transcendent. The word "miracle" derives from the Latin *miraculum*, meaning "object of wonder," and the Greek *meidian*, meaning "to smile," which are both linked to the Sanskrit root *smi*, again signifying "to smile" (see Davis, 1998: 4).[2] In the thrall of "the miracle proper," we are thus "captivate[d] but with levity" or "joyously spellbound" (McGee, 2010: 838). The perceptions of early cinema and its ancestor technologies mentioned above owe less to the religious interpretations attacked by Hume than to secular notions of the wondrous.

Echoing the late nineteenth-century reactions to cinema recounted by Corkin, a unique power to convert the ordinary into the extraordinary was also approvingly attributed to the medium by certain critics affiliated with the surrealist movement. For Antonin Artaud, "the cinema has an unexpected and mysterious side which we find in no other form of art. Even the most arid and banal image is transformed when it is projected on the screen" (Artaud, 1978: 63). Surrealist writings on film are scattered with celebratory allusions to its capacity to turn the real into the marvelous. In an essay which affirms this power, Ado Kyrou describes the marvelous as "the crux of Surrealism" and links it to a materialist love for the impossible (Kyrou, 1978: 102). In this sense, explains Kyrou, the marvelous differs from the fantastic, which refers to phenomena accounted for instead in non-materialist or numinous terms (1978: 102–103). Mentions of miracles in surrealist film criticism are relatively rare and not always enthusiastic, reflecting the Surrealists' hostility toward the Church. According to Kyrou, for example, *Miracolo a Milano* (Miracle in Milan, 1951) is blemished by the intervention of "an other-worldly marvellous" (1978: 103). However, in a text on collage, Louis Aragon associates the miracle with an understanding of the marvelous as rooted in this world.[3] Prefacing his remarks with a scathing assault on Christianity which chimes with Kyrou's refutation of the transcendent, Aragon redefines the miracle in materialist terms: "The miracle is an unexpected disorder, a surprising disproportion. And it is in this

respect that it is the negation of the real, and that it becomes, once accepted as miracle, the reconciliation of the real and the marvellous. The new relation thus established is surreality …" (Aragon, 1993: 37).

Aragon's remarks point to a latent connection between Buñuel's first film and the miracle, a topic it does not broach explicitly. In *Un chien andalou* (An Andalusian Dog, 1929), made with Salvador Dalí, the illusion of a logical, rational world created by realist film narrative is eroded by spatiotemporal incoherencies (see Adamowicz, 2010: 34–36) and a profusion of impossible events: a woman's sliced eye is healed; a tie ties itself; books turn into revolvers, and so on. The boundary between the real and the imaginary is further troubled as body parts and everyday items are transformed into mysterious or fetish objects. For example, an excess of significance is invested in men's hands, a woman's armpit, a box, and a razor by means of close-ups, trick props, and cuts or dissolves that suggest prodigious mutations. The real and the marvelous, then, are not presented as antithetical in this film but blend and merge disruptively with each other as they do, for Aragon, in the miracle. Furthermore, the film contains a range of non-narrative "attractions" (such as the ants crawling out of the male protagonist's hand) whose novel, captivating, and often humorous qualities recall the properties of the *miraculum*. *Un chien andalou* sculpts marvels out of material reality, its numerous religious symbols notwithstanding. In contrast, *Simón del desierto* and *La Voie lactée*, as we shall see, marry a materialist preoccupation with the impossible with investigations of supernatural agency. If the advent of cinema played a role in separating the miracle from religion, Buñuel's explicit treatments of the theme remind us that the concept "remains conditioned by an indelible theological tradition" (de Vries, 2002: 212).

In a discussion of *La Voie lactée*, Raymond Durgnat cautions critics from secularized societies against dismissing Buñuel's interest in religion as an archaism (Durgnat, 1977: 147). Validating this warning, today, surprisingly, miracles are back in fashion in certain Continental philosophical circles. Whereas the attraction of the phenomenon for seventeenth- and eighteenth-century scholars like Hume and Baruch Spinoza (1670) was the light it seemed to throw on the nature of knowledge and belief, current thinkers are more commonly drawn to miracles for ethical and political reasons. One of the best known recent approaches emerges from the Marxist tradition and rehabilitates the miracle as a symbol of revolution in the service of a repoliticized ethics (see, for example, Badiou, 1988: 235–245 and Žižek, 1999: 142, 158). But it is in a different contemporary line of inquiry, rooted instead in what has been characterized as the theological turn of French phenomenology, that a connection between miracles and machines emerges which has particular relevance for Buñuel's films.

In "Foi et savoir" (Faith and Knowledge), a seminal text in this latter vein, Jacques Derrida attempts to dismantle what he sees as a reductive opposition between religion and "those sites of abstraction that are the machine, technics, technoscience and above all the transcendence of tele-technology" (Derrida, 1998a: 2). Not only, contends Derrida, do religion and science share a common source in a form of

originary faith; the battlegrounds on which the "new 'wars of religion'" are fought are "*digital culture*, *jet* and *TV* without which there would be no religious manifestation today" (1998a: 24, emphasis in original). Part of what interests him about miracles is their capacity to help correct the false polarization of these domains. Both science and religion involve modes of testimony, an act which, for Derrida, is inherently linked to the miracle since it promises truth "beyond all proof, all perception, all intuitive demonstration" (1998a: 63–64). In "Above All, No Journalists!" he elaborates on these connections, arguing that the association between the mediatic and the religious inscribes itself in the continuity "between the ordinary miracle of the 'believe me' and the extraordinary miracles revealed by all the Holy Scriptures" (Derrida, 2001b: 77). For Derrida, then, the concept of the supernatural miracle is inextricably bound up with the kinds of faith required by science and the media. As Michael Naas puts it, "Foi et savoir" implies that "the *miracle* of religion … is always doubled, supplemented and thus contaminated by the *machine* of science and teletechnology"; indeed, it posits miracle and machine as "the condition or source of the other" (Naas, 2009: 184, 186, emphasis in original).[4]

This necessarily selective discussion of the shifting modern meanings of the miracle suggests that, contrary to what some of Buñuel's commentators have assumed, divine agency is only one of the possible signifieds of those in his films. Buñuel's cinema might at first seem to have little in common with the abstract digital sphere that is limned in Derrida's explorations of religion. However, in an interview with *Cahiers du cinéma*, Derrida describes the analogue system of celluloid film as pivoting on the issues of belief and spectrality – precisely the terms in which he speaks of miracles elsewhere (Derrida, 2001a: 77, 78; 1998b: 97–98). His writings thus hint at an intrinsic link between thaumaturgy and the cinema which is differently formulated in Buñuel's films and interviews. The analyses that follow suggest that the miracle stories in *Simón del desierto* and *La Voie lactée* recall the transformative powers attributed to cinema in its earliest days and by the Surrealists while also foreshadowing poststructuralist critiques of religion in their coupling of the sacred and the technological realms. In this sense, my readings parallel recent reassessments of certain surrealist practices as proto-deconstructionist. While Buñuel's conception of miracles is influenced by popular Catholic cults (see de Ros, 2004) which do not impinge on Derrida's account, noting the overlaps between them enables us to see how these films fit into a tradition of inquiry in which the problem of the miracle is technologically as well as theologically charged.

The Saint as Cineaste: *Simón del desierto*

Allusions to miracles are not uncommon in either the commercial or the more personal films that Buñuel made in Mexico and France in the 1950s and 1960s. The heroine of *Susana*, aka *Demonio y carne* (Susana, aka The Devil and the Flesh, 1950)

(Rosita Quintana), for example, begs God for a miracle to enable her to escape from a correctional institute and at once discovers that the bars on her window are loose. Yet, as Durgnat points out (1977: 69–70), the ensuing events imply "a singular lack of foresight, and disdain for the law of the land" on the part of God. The "miracle" in *La Mort en ce jardin* (Death in the Garden, 1956) is similarly ambiguous. Lost in an expanse of South American jungle and close to starving, a band of fugitives stumbles across the wreckage of an airplane laden with life-saving provisions. While one of the travelers, Father Lisardi (Michel Piccoli), initially attributes the discovery to divine beneficence, the plane crash has cost the lives of the passengers and also indirectly leads to the deaths of all but two of Lisardi's group. The film can thus be read as satirizing *deus ex machina* narrative denouements. If *La Mort en ce jardin* implicitly conjoins a critique of the notion of providence with an emblem of modernity and progress in the form of the plane, *Nazarín* (1958) explicitly questions the distinction between divine miracles and those of science. When begged to heal a sick girl by some women who believe him to be a saint, the main protagonist (Francisco Rabal) urges them to place their trust in medicine as well as in Christ, so that when the girl recovers, the audience is left to decide between the pious and the medical explanation. In distinct ways, then, each of these films playfully ironizes religious interpretations of extraordinary events, warning us against taking miracle stories at face value.

These ambivalent references to thaumaturgy pre-empt Buñuel's more thorough subsequent investigations of the theme in several ways. First, they are saturated with dramatic irony; the film audience has cause to be more suspicious of them than the on-screen protagonists. Second, they emphasize that miracles do not bear transparent, self-evident, fixed meanings but are signs which need to be deciphered and are open to multiple readings. Late twentieth-century biblical scholarship has proposed that the Gospel of Mark, which devotes proportionately greater attention to miracles than any other early Christian text, understands them not as self-explanatory but as akin in form and function to Jesus' parables – that is, as "messages or puzzles that require interpretation" (Marshall, 1989: 57, 60). Buñuel's enigmatic and riddle-like – albeit heretical – miracle stories are in this sense conceptually closer to early Christian narratives than to modern Catholic miracle cults. Third, *Nazarín* and *La Mort en ce jardin* differently acknowledge the fraught relationship between supernatural miracles and modern science that will be more fully explored in Buñuel's films of the following decade. However, whereas whether or not the unlikely events featured in these works of the late 1950s are divinely wrought is a matter of social consensus, *Simón del desierto* and *La Voie lactée* dramatize incidents which cannot be explained as natural. We may infer too that miracles are more central to the meanings of these later films from the privileged positions that they occupy at the beginning and end of the narratives.

At first glance, the miracle accomplished in the opening scene of *Simón del desierto* may seem to offer little evidence of an interlocking concern with machines. It consists of a man regrowing hands which have been amputated as a punishment for

stealing. Problematically, in view of the classical realist style of the scene, the miracle is presented as authentic. Both the identity of the thaumaturge (played by Claudio Brook) – an ascetic modeled on the fifth-century Syrian saint Simeon Stylites – and the fact that the action is set mainly in a pre-technological era (as Kirsten Strom notes, this is "in effect, Buñuel's only history film" [Strom, 2003: 1]) function to naturalize the mystery. Gaunt, bearded, dressed in a coarse tunic and frequently framed in postures of supplication and self-abnegation against dramatic cloud-swept desert skies, Simón's figure draws on the traditional iconography of Christ as a man of sorrow and prayer more directly than some in Buñuel's eclectic gallery of Christ likenesses, including the mirthful painting in *Nazarín* and the blind, intoxicated beggar Don Amalio who occupies the central position in the famous *tableau vivant* restaging of Leonardo da Vinci's The *Last Supper in Viridiana* (1961). Furthermore, unlike the child's return to health in *Nazarín*, for example, the healing performed by Simón cannot be attributed to medicine. Xon de Ros notes that in a possible source text for the film, physicist and psychoanalyst Gonzalo Rodríguez Lafora singles out resurrection and, most pertinently here, the return of missing limbs as the only two events capable of casting doubt on scientific explanations of supposedly miraculous cures (de Ros, 2004: 74). Indeed, more than the bare fact, it is the bodily specifics of Simón's miracle which encourage the viewer to accept it as such. Compounding this, the feat takes place in front of a crowd of on-screen witnesses, which further verifies it within the closed world of the fiction.

The interpretive problem or enigma posed by this apparently authentic miracle is witnessed in the divergent reactions provoked by the scene. For some critics, it can be laughed off as part of what Gwynne Edwards characterizes as the film's "largely comic" and "absurdist" denunciation of religious fanaticism and intolerance (Edwards, 2005: 127). Indeed, the first action the man performs with his new hands – cuffing his child – is ironic and profane. Tomás Pérez Turrent suggests, however, that there is nothing to prevent viewers from drawing the opposite conclusion; as he puts it to Buñuel: "here a priest could say you are a believer" (Pérez Turrent and de la Colina, 1993: 190). Other commentators have interpreted the miracles in the film neither as predominantly comic nor as expressions of Christian faith but rather as visually epitomizing the mysteries of material reality. According to de Ros, for instance, "[Buñuel] believed in the miraculous. Not, of course, in the religious sense, which tries to impose an ultimate logic on it …. By contrast the inexplicable is at the centre of Buñuel's poetics, of which the miracle is an emblem" (de Ros, 2004: 77). All of these readings assume, like Hume, a strict separation between the miracle and the realms of reason, knowledge, and science. I want to add to their insights by teasing out a self-reflexive strand that runs throughout the film, aligning miracles with rationalist epistemologies, the cinema apparatus, and other kinds of technology.

Crucial to understanding the significance of Simón's miracle is the film's adoption and subversion of codes and conventions associated with documentary, on the

one hand, and classical Hollywood cinema, on the other. That the film has affinities with non-fiction forms is suggested by both Buñuel (see de Ros, 2004: 77) and his critics. De Ros refers to its "documentary mode of address," citing in support Pauline Kael's observation that its style is "as bare and objective as if [Buñuel] were documenting a scientific demonstration" (de Ros, 2004: 77; Kael, 1978: 273). Another critic maintains that the dramatic landscape in which the action is set plays as important a role as narrative and character. According to Michael Wood, the shots "are as much about the desert as about Simon, and we can almost see the thinness of the air" (Wood, 2008: 6). In Gabriel Figueroa's monochrome cinematography, the vast cactus-dotted plains around Ixmiquilpan in Mexico and the spectacular, ever-changing skies above them provide intrinsic interest and visual pleasure, rather than a mere backdrop. By diverting the viewer's attention from narrative causes and effects to natural features in the world beyond the film, these images perform a documentary function. In these various respects, *Simón del desierto* may call to mind the premodern miracle-machine imagined by Buñuel in interview: "It's a shame that cinema wasn't invented centuries ago. The most trivial newsreel from the Middle Ages would be marvellous: Joan of Arc's death at the stake, a society ball at the castle of Gilles de Rais, a documentary on the cultivation of beets in those times" (Pérez Turrent and de la Colina, 1993: 190). Like Buñuel's earlier-cited remarks in the same interview about the medium's ability to resurrect the dead and render perceptible the growth of a plant or the flight of a bullet, these speculations ascribe film's capacity to induce wonder to its purchase on the material world, linking the miracle to a realist ontology, or account of the nature, of the filmic image. However, in line with the tradition of reflection on testimony which accords miracles a privileged place, *Simón del desierto* skews documentary codes by depicting prodigious feats which erode the viewer's trust in the image.

As Peter Evans emphasizes, Buñuel's films "use the language of creative discourse, not of simple documentary" (Evans, 1995: 79). *Simón del desierto* relies heavily on continuity editing, the system which traditionally makes cinematic space and time appear continuous and coherent in order to naturalize the action and safeguard the seamless unfolding of the narrative. However, certain cuts create temporal or spatial incongruities which lead the viewer to question the chain of causes and effects. The opening scene is edited in classical continuity style, employing establishing shots and the 180 degree system and disguising cuts by means of matches on action and overlapping diegetic sound. Simón's ability to bend the laws of physics is portrayed without recourse to special effects. To work the miracle, Buñuel uses prosthetic stumps and conventional editing. As Simón and the crowd kneel in prayer, the film cuts between the saint and the mutilated thief. Simón stands and proclaims the man healed. Next, in a medium close-up which creates suspense by initially excluding the ends of the thief's raised arms from the frame, we see him lower them to reveal new hands. Charles Tesson highlights the solidity of the frame and the significance of the cut in Buñuel's filmmaking by contrasting his style with Jean Renoir's: "In Renoir's work, the sensation of

life is conveyed by reframing, the permanent traversal of on-screen space by the *hors-champ*. In Buñuel's, … the shot is a closed space, a tiny, autarchic, discontinuous fragment of theatre which is subject to the imperative of montage" (Tesson, 1995: 22). More ambiguous, however, are the relationships between the alternating shots of Simón and the thief, which simultaneously reinforce and undermine continuity. The assumption that space and time flow smoothly across the cuts is fortified here by shot/reverse-shots and eye-line matches but challenged by the implausible reappearance of the missing hands. This deflects attention from the progress of the narrative to the mechanisms behind it, foregrounding the process of editing and denaturalizing causality. In both subject matter and form, this scene marks its memory of *Un chien andalou*, another film which features severed hands and uses montage to produce miraculous transformations. Yet, in contrast to the famous prologue to the earlier film, which supplies an allegory of the cinematic cut in images of ocular wounding, Simón's healing allegorizes the splice, the joining of shots to create new wholes, in a representation of bodily reconstruction. Moreover, the on-screen presence of a horde of observers, whose role is underscored by references in the dialogue to "witnessing" and "seeing," makes the scene readable as a *mise en abyme* of film spectatorship. In short, here Buñuel uses a religious phenomenon to prompt reflection on the ostensibly quite distinct issue of film technology, to make visible the machinery behind the cinematic illusion.

The film as a whole can be viewed as a playful and subversive exploration of the continuity conventions of realist narrative and the thaumaturgical powers of montage. A series of exhilarating crane shots in which the camera tracks and pans along and around the pillar on top of which Simón lives promote spatial continuity while introducing temporal uncertainty. Attention is called to the presence of the mechanical eye by the ironic contrast between its freedom of movement and the self-imposed stasis of the ascetic, who has climbed the column to be closer to God and desires to ascend further to heaven. Without violating realist codes, the well-oiled, meticulously choreographed motion of the camera imbues these shots of a pre-technological world with an anachronistic quality. The cinematic apparatus makes its presence felt here as a kind of chronological error, a glitch in time. Historical realism is more overtly undermined by the costumes worn by the Devil (Silvia Pinal), which range from a tunic of the kind associated with Ancient Greece and Rome to a Victorian child's sailor suit. Like the God whose presence is implied by the miracle, the Devil will not be thwarted by physical laws or realist narrative conventions. As Strom notes, these anachronisms "work to undo the film's own claims to historicity" (Strom, 2003: 1). The dismantling of claims to historical accuracy, moreover, is compounded by the magic wrought by the montage. Only occasionally does Buñuel resort to rudimentary conjuring tricks to evoke the Devil's powers, such as an "invisible" rope which makes a coffin appear to propel itself across the ground. Usually he depicts her abilities by means of standard editing which, in contradictory fashion, at once bolsters and damages the illusion of spatiotemporal congruence. In the midst of conversations with Simón that are filmed

in classic shot/reverse-shots, the Devil changes not only her appearance but also her location: one moment, she is shouting temptations at him from the ground; the next, she is on top of the pillar whispering in his ear. Discontinuities in time and space are exacerbated by uncertainty over the extent to which the film depicts the ascetic's fantasy. Is the Devil a figment of Simón's imagination, a figure in his dreams? Or is she conjured up by the film, rather than by his psyche? By undermining narrative coherence, these multiple sources of ambiguity promote awareness of the film's constructedness and reinforce the coupling of the supernatural and the cinematic, foreshadowing the film's denouement.

The conclusion mirrors the opening and cements the link between miracles, cinema, and technology. Simón and the Devil are arguing on top of the pillar when they hear the roar of a jet engine. The film cuts to a plane passing overhead. In the next shot, the camera pans from an empty sky to the capital on which the protagonists were standing, revealing it to be deserted, then zooms in and pulls focus, so that the pillar becomes blurred. Next, as the camera zooms immediately back out, the distinctive sky-scraping roofs of mid-twentieth-century Manhattan, filmed from a plane, move into focus. This series of shots once again disturbs classical continuity codes from within. A superficial cohesion is created by the diegetic sound of the plane, which persists across the three cuts. Moreover, the zooms and focal adjustments pay lip service to classical narrative conventions for demarcating significant temporal ellipses by disguising the simple cut from desert to city as a dissolve. Nevertheless, this cut jars. Although, due in large part to the dialogue, narrative causes and effects are not unclear (the protagonists board a plane which transports them to 1960s New York), the viewer is disorientated by the anachronistic appearance of the plane in the desert, the abrupt disappearance of Simón and the Devil, the transition from a static viewpoint close to the ground to a dizzying aerial tracking and panning shot and, finally, the excision of massive chunks of space and time. The protagonists' journey parallels the powers of the plane on its flight through time and space with the capabilities of cinematic montage.

The film's abrupt and disjunctive denouement after barely three-quarters of an hour bears witness to the financial pressures that forced Buñuel to conclude production prematurely. But the supposedly make-do ending functions nonetheless to bolster the internal logic and coherence of the end product. *Simón del desierto* is bookended by two different kinds of thaumaturgical display, with the miracle of divine healing with which it opens doubled by that of science at its close. The film does not describe a voyage from faith to reason and knowledge; science and technology do not usurp the place of religion. Rather, Buñuel implies that the two spheres supplement and contaminate each other by reimagining supersonic flight as a means of transport to Hell. The film ends with an explosion of energy: the infernal regions are envisioned in the final sequence as a jam-packed, throbbing, smoky 1960s disco. Leaving Simón to watch from the sidelines, the Devil, like the camera, is swallowed up by a crowd of youthful bodies performing a spasmodic, agitated dance which she suggestively calls the "Radioactive Flesh" – also known, she clarifies, as "the last

dance." And just as a modern machine is overwritten with a religious meaning at the film's climax, so too the miracle of faith at its outset, prefiguring the conclusions of Derrida and Naas, cannot be separated from the realm of the mechanical and the mediatic, which the film renders visible throughout by manipulating classical codes. Indeed, Buñuel's meta-discursive investigation of cinema as thaumaturgy casts Simón the saint, paradoxically, as a premodern filmmaker.

Prodigious Travel: *La Voie lactée*

Buñuel speculated retrospectively that Simón might have been given a cameo role in *La Voie lactée* (see Wood, 2008: 9). Certainly, the 1969 film shares a number of overt concerns with that of 1965. A dispute amongst local monks at the base of Simón's pillar about the doctrines of hypostasis, anastasis, and apocatastasis pre-empts what Ian Christie terms the "tortuous dialectic of heresy/orthodoxy" which patterns the later project (Christie, 2004: 134). Moreover, Simón himself would not look out of place among the eclectic array of Christian fanatics who populate *La Voie lactée*. In addition, violations of the laws of time and space are as routine on the roads from Fontainebleau to Santiago de Compostela traveled by this film's two down-and-out modern pilgrims, Pierre Dupont (Paul Frankeur) and Jean Duval (Laurent Terzieff), as they are in Simón's premodern desert. Beyond these obvious continuities, however, *La Voie lactée*, which is of standard feature length, deepens and complicates the unannounced connections between faith and technology and, in particular, between thaumaturgy and cinema, that I have traced through *Simón del desierto*.

On the surface, *La Voie lactée*, like *Simón del desierto*, might appear to frame the problem of the miracle in exclusively theological terms, rather than self-consciously cinematic ones. Scattered with heavenly and diabolical apparitions and deeds and stories of other supernatural interventions, the film draws inspiration from devout accounts of miracles, including the Gospels and, according to Buñuel, the poems of Gonzalo de Berceo (Pérez Turrent and de la Colina, 1993: 202). Whether they are fantasized by the protagonists or by the film, the miraculous events depicted are superficially naturalized by the pilgrimage narrative. Closer scrutiny, however, reveals that these incidents undermine the seamless unfolding of the narrative in ways which draw attention to the processes of narration. Although *La Voie lactée*, like the 1965 film, employs few special effects or visual tricks and has also been linked to documentary (see Taranger, 2004: 523), the implausible occurrences it presents once again call into question its purchase on the world outside it, while furnishing Buñuel with further opportunities to play with realist narrative codes.

Firstly, like the Devil who visits Simón, supernatural presences upset continuity. A few minutes into the film, Jean and Pierre pass a mysterious stranger (Alain Cuny), who is walking alone. They happen to glance back at him, and, in the next



Figure 20.1 *La Voie lactée*: Mary appears to the students. Fraia Film, Greenwich Film Productions, and Medusa Produzione.

shot, we see him accompanied by a dwarf and a dove, forming a trio which, as has often been noted, symbolically evokes the Holy Trinity. The appearances of these and other figures seemingly out of nowhere accentuate the cuts and splices, subverting the illusion of a continuous diegetic world. Secondly, miracles denaturalize relationships of cause and effect through overdetermination, an excess of motivational cues. For example, in the middle of the film, two Unitarian students from medieval times (Denis Manuel and Daniel Pilon) make ostensibly throwaway remarks about rumors of sleepwalkers in the forest they are traversing and miracles. Right on cue, the Virgin Mary (Edith Scob) materializes in front of them, luminescent in the darkness of the night, dressed in the pale blue of classical Marian iconography and accompanied by the sounds of birds, lambs, and a harp (Figure 20.1). Thirdly, in contrast to the prodigies we witness in *Simón del desierto*, which are quite tightly integrated into the main narrative, miracles more often interrupt than advance Pierre and Jean's journey; they are a recurrent feature of the multiple sub-narratives that link the film to the conventional pilgrimage tale. Finally, accounts of divine interventions function to foreground and disrupt mechanisms of closure, another principle of classical narrative structure. For instance, in one of three loose reconstructions of scenes or stories from the Gospels, we encounter Christ (Bernard Verley) and the thirsty guests at the Cana wedding. Revealingly, Buñuel interrupts the narrative before its climax, withholding the anticipated spectacle of the transformation of water into wine. In *La Voie lactée*, then, miracles are consistently ironically undercut and serve to mount an assault on narrative itself.

The often assumed antimony between faith and reason that I have argued is implicitly deconstructed in *Simón del desierto* is occasionally explicitly addressed in *La Voie lactée's* palimpsestic dialogue, which incorporates citations from the Bible and theological, historical, and literary texts. In keeping with the film's dialectical patterning, opposing views on this antinomy are voiced by different characters. The Virgin Mary's appearance prompts one of the Unitarian students to conclude that "faith is accorded to us not by reason …; it is the heart that must be touched." The same dichotomy is reiterated by a brigadier (Claude Cerval) whose opinion that all miracles are natural phenomena with scientific explanations contrasts with the student's interpretation of them, and by a character who utters only a single line: "my hatred of science and my horror of technology will lead me one day to this absurd belief in God." But the pilgrims also encounter contradictory positions. A priest (François Maistre) asserts that science increasingly concurs with the Bible. A *maître d'hôtel* (Julien Bertheau) insists that "a reasonable man cannot possibly be intimately and sincerely persuaded that there is no God."

The opposition between religion and science is further troubled by the film's twinning of the motifs of the miracle and technologies of travel. The jarring cut at the end of *Simón del desierto* which links these ostensibly alien phenomena is recalled in *La Voie lactée* by the juxtaposition of the age-old practice of pilgrimage with modern modes of transport. These interlocking concerns are established in the first few minutes of the film. A prologue introducing the ancient route that Jean and Pierre will follow concludes with a cut which graphically matches a peaceful, antiquated lane in Santiago de Compostela with a busy motorway. The ensuing credit sequence bombards us with the aggravating sights and sounds of heavy traffic. Indeed, iconographically, the film borrows less from traditional representations of pilgrims perambulating along tranquil, isolated paths (as found, for example, in Thomas Cole's nineteenth-century religious paintings) than from the cinematic genre of the road movie. Furthermore, in parallel with its images of cars and trains, *La Voie lactée* highlights the mechanisms and codes used by cinema to transport us through space and time. Non-contiguous locations and moments are joined not only by montage but also by *mise en scène* within individual shots. Time travel no longer requires a plane as it did in *Simón del desierto*. Instead, skewing continuity conventions more thoroughly, Buñuel employs "any detail whatsoever" to leap between centuries (Pérez Turrent and de la Colina, 1993: 202). This detail may be an abstract idea (the question of whether God exists carries us from the present to the Marquis de Sade's dungeon), a sound (rumbles of thunder form the flimsiest of bridges between a scene from the life of the fourth-century ascetic Priscillian and the twentieth century), or a material object (putting on the clothes of modern hunters is enough to convey the medieval students to the pilgrims' era). As Marsha Kinder notes, "within the grammar of Hollywood continuity editing, cutting on motion prevents the viewer from noticing the rupture, but Buñuel's attentiveness to the fetishized detail *within* the shot actually accentuates the break" (Kinder, 2002: 11, emphasis in original). By playing on the affinities between thaumaturgy and the spatiotemporal

contrivances of cinematic narrative, Jean and Pierre's mechanized pilgrimage forges connections between religion and technology.

The affiliation between miracles and cinema is underscored in the final scene of the film. In another loose adaption of New Testament material, Christ purports to heal two blind men, who then endeavor to follow him. Yet the film's last shot casts doubt on the efficacy of their cure, marooning the men by a ditch, as they struggle to cross, their canes still tapping. As Buñuel acknowledges, there are multiple ways of reading this most mysterious of his miracle tales (Pérez Turrent and de la Colina, 1993: 205). Joan Mellen views it as a blunt critique of belief in Christ's divinity: "we have the depiction of a ridiculous Christ … who *pretends* to have effected a miraculous cure of a blind man" (Mellen, 1978: 9, emphasis added). In contrast, Wood interprets the events depicted as ambiguous and open-ended: "Do we assume that Christ's miracle was only temporary, that the fortunate/unfortunate men are blind again? Or that even seeing, they have kept the habits of blind men, [and] cannot trust themselves to cross ditches? Is there a comment here on Christ's showy heartlessness, or a suggestion of how difficult it is to follow Him?" (Wood, 1993: 106). For Marie-Claude Taranger, who also stresses this lack of resolution, the scene encapsulates the interrogative agenda of the film as a whole by ironically turning "a classical metaphor for the discovery of truth" (the restoration of physical sight) into a "questioning … of truth and its foundations" (Taranger, 2004: 523–524). While keeping these various potential meanings in play, I want to draw attention to critically neglected correspondences between the scene's subject matter and its material support.

Several aspects of the scene, some of which link it to other portrayals of thaumaturgy in the film, conspire to shift attention from the unfolding of the miracle story to the properties of cinema. Firstly, spatiotemporal coherence is disrupted. Two separate times and spaces converge within the shots: the setting is a twentieth-century forest near Santiago de Compostela adjoining first-century Palestine, and the blind men wear modern clothes while Christ and his disciples are traditionally dressed. Secondly, the blind men's test of faith diegetically mirrors the voluntary suspension of disbelief invited by dominant modes of narrative cinema, whose viewers are supposed to disavow their knowledge that the spectacle is an illusion. Thirdly, the scene's themes of vision and blindness likewise bridge the independent realms of religious and spectatorial experience. As Derrida notes, part of what distinguishes Christianity from Judaism and Islam is the doctrine of "the incarnation, the mediation, the *hoc est meum corpus*, the Eucharist: God becomes visible" (Derrida, 2001b: 58). In the film this belief is both explicitly debated and implicitly referenced by Christ's appearance. However, as in the *tableau vivant* in *Viridiana*, where the blind Don Amalio stands in for Christ, the incarnation of God is subversively associated at the end of *La Voie lactée* with the impairment of vision. Not only are Christ's sight-restoring powers questioned; a connection is also established between the blind/sighted men and the viewer. In contrast to the irrefutable "proof" furnished by the spectacle of the regrown hands in *Simón del desierto*, *La Voie lactée* pointedly refuses to meet the demand for visual

evidence to authenticate Christ's miracle. Furthermore, the final shot interferes with our vision by ultimately losing sight of the men's feet as the camera pans from the ditch to an unremarkable patch of grass, compounding the difficulty of making sense of the film's conclusion and heightening our awareness of the invisible space beyond the frame.

The denouement of *La Voie lactée* thus draws together many of the concerns of this chapter: faith and knowledge, the religious and the mediatic, testimony and illusion. In Buñuel's films of 1965 and 1969, miracles are secretive, unstable, and contradictory signs which refer simultaneously to numinous and mechanical powers, the wonder of divine works and of the new. Questioning the religion/science dichotomy, these films prefigure the recent revival of philosophical interest in the miracle as a symbol of the confrontation between faith and secularism on the battleground of the media. Buñuel's meta-discursive reflections on film as thaumaturgy anticipate Naas's Derridean account of the miracle of religion as always shadowed by the machine, while Derrida's argument that science is indissociable from a certain mode of faith echoes the filmmaker's ambivalence toward scientific rationalism. Buñuel's miracle stories, however, emerge in a different context from these theoretical interventions and offer distinctive insights into the specific capacities of the cinematic medium. As Sylvie Pierre observes, "all miracles, all supernatural events giggle diabolically in Buñuel's work: it is cinema which manifests its power through them" (Pierre, 1969: 40). Sparking reflection on epistemology, causality, belief, and illusion, *Simón del desierto* and *La Voie lactée* rethink the miracle, the smile-inducing object of wonder, as an emblem of the deep and multifaceted relationship between theology and the technology, ontology, and spectatorship of film.

Notes

1 While there is a vast and still growing body of literature on the interactions between Buñuel's cinema and religion, there are relatively few in-depth analyses of the significance of the specific phenomenon of the miracle in individual films, and none, as far as I know, of its role across his work. In a rare extended discussion of the topic, Xon de Ros (2004) investigates the possible influence on *Simón del desierto* of historical and scientific accounts of miracles, the Virgin of Lourdes as a paradigmatic case, the Marian cult and an attempt to document on film a wave of visions of Mary in Spain in the early 1930s. Other readings of the 1965 film containing fruitful insights into its supernatural elements concentrate on its ambiguities and satirical components (Kael, 1978), its relationship to Catholicism (Wood, 1993), and its post-positivist rewriting of history (Strom, 2003). Brief commentary on the prodigious appears in many texts on *La Voie lactée*, including considerations of the challenges it poses to criticism, its self-referentiality, and its interrogation of narrative (Pierre, 1969; Christie, 2004). A series of new frames through which Buñuel's treatments of miracles can be reviewed are provided by the recent proliferation of philosophical discussions of the topic. Key interventions in the debate include texts by Derrida (1998a), de Vries (2001), Naas (2009), Badiou (1988), and

Santner (2005). The dialogue between film, religion, and theology, to which Buñuel's work makes distinctive contributions, is also attracting increasing critical attention, as witnessed, for example, by the volume *The Religion and Film Reader*, edited by Mitchell and Plate (2007).

2 The Spanish term *milagro*, meaning "miracle," also derives from the Latin *miraculum*.

3 I am grateful to Elza Adamowicz for drawing my attention to Aragon's discussion of the miracle.

4 See de Vries (2001) for another Derridean analysis of the relationship between miracles and the media.

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The Road and the Room

Narrative Drive in the Films of Luis Buñuel

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On the Road and in the Room

One of the most mysterious images in Buñuel's cinema is the recurring scene in *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* (The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie, 1972) where the ensemble of six main characters walk down a desolate country road leading nowhere, a sequence that is not rooted in any specific time or place and in no way contributes to the plot. The repetition of this sequence, with subtle variations, encourages us to look for related recurring road scenes in his other films – like the long-shot of a horse-drawn carriage on a tree-lined road in the erotic fantasy that opens *Belle de jour* (1967) and later provides entry into other masochistic daydreams; or the montage of traffic scenes (from busy freeways to French country lanes) that launches the heretical pilgrimage to Spain in the opening of *La Voie lactée* (The Milky Way, 1969); or a bourgeois gentleman buying a first-class train ticket between France and Spain at the opening of *Cet obscur objet du désir* (That Obscure Object of Desire, 1977), a trip he repeats during the film. These repetitions make us wonder how such road imagery, narrative vehicles, and restless movements function in Buñuel's cinema, during all phases of his career. While these patterns draw on Spain's tradition of picaresque fiction, they also address Buñuel's experience of exile. Perhaps most interestingly, they generate open-ended database narratives that expose the combined processes of selection and combination of modular story elements from an underlying database, a form that anticipated what was to come in future decades (Kinder, 2002).

Equally mysterious and pivotal to Buñuel's cinema is the narrative situation at the heart of *El ángel exterminador* (The Exterminating Angel, 1962), Buñuel's first

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film in Mexico on which he had total artistic control. An ensemble of bourgeois guests find themselves trapped in a luxurious drawing room following a night at a concert of classical music and an elegant late supper. Despite several attempts to leave, they are unable to cross the threshold, as if trapped by their own existential failure of will in a hellish Sartrian social space from which there is no exit. Entrapment within a bourgeois household also occurs in Buñuel's two features made in Spain, where the primary danger is sexual violation: earlier in *Viridiana* (1961), where the entrapment is also associated with an elegant meal that parodies Leonardo da Vinci's *The Last Supper*, and later in *Tristana* (1970) without the benefit of the banquet. Yet, this situation is treated with the greatest abstraction, theatricality, and absurdity in *El ángel exterminador*, partly because, as in *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie*, the focus is on the ensemble rather than an individual protagonist.

The repetition of the road and the room exposes a paradox at the core of Buñuel's narrative experimentation. Instead of functioning as a binary, both tropes provide alternative versions of narrative entrapment, confirming that liberty is a phantom. Like the forked path in *Tristana*, these two tropes seem to offer a choice, but whether the protagonist follows the *road* that leads to a mad dog shot in the street or discovers a *room* where she finds a new lover, neither can make her forget or elude the guardian who molested her. The interplay between the road and the room cultivated a reliance on both narrative expansion and compression, enabling Buñuel to leverage the dialogic effect they had on each other. Like Jonathan Swift's reliance on giants and pygmies in *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) as alternative perspectives for exposing the limitations of its nomadic protagonist, this strategy proved effective for Buñuel's use of satire.

In *El ángel exterminador*, one of the trapped characters irrationally concludes that repetition can somehow free them from their prison. Claiming that all of them are arranged in precisely the same pattern that they were in at the moment they first experienced this failure of will (even though some characters have died), she uses this ritual to drive their escape from the mansion. Yet the entrapment is soon repeated on a larger scale as they become similarly confined in the cathedral where they give thanks for their alleged emancipation. Their spatial confinement is intensified not only on the macro level in the spiritual realm of the church, but also on the micro level in the closets within the parlor, which are appropriated for bodily functions – excretion, sex, and death. The film shows how spatial confinement is reinforced both by expansion and compression, both by religion and *l'amour fou* (mad love), which, despite their respective promises and charms, provide no escape from our animal nature and mortality.

The interweaving of these two narrative tropes (the road and the room) is most apparent in *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie*, which is structured by the recurrence of both (Figures 21.1 and 21.2). The abstract road scene is repeated three times, creating borders that impose an arbitrary order, like hedges planted in a wild garden. Although the road appears to be totally open-ended, the repetition of these scenes creates an almost classical structure, as if dividing the episodic narrative into three



Figure 21.1 The road in *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie*. Dean Film, Greenwich Film Productions, and Medus Produzione.



Figure 21.2 The room in *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie*. Dean Film, Greenwich Film Productions, and Medusa Produzione.

parallel acts and providing a sense of closure. This repetition also reassures us that, despite all misfortunes that befall our charming traffickers (including imprisonment and death), they resiliently bounce back like toons. The abstraction evokes picaresque fiction, yet here we have not a singular lower-class rogue but an ensemble of corrupt bourgeois conspirators whose survival may not be so reassuring.

In addition to the recurring images of the road, the film also presents a recurring series of bourgeois dinner parties in enclosed rooms, which build on the banquets from *Viridiana* and *El ángel exterminador*. But here they are marked by absurd anomalies (e.g., a tearoom that runs out of coffee, tea, and milk, or a restaurant that doubles as funeral parlor) and are repeatedly interrupted by sex, death, and dreams. Their theatricality is underscored when one of the dinner parties takes place on stage, a variation that turns out to be a nightmare. Rooted in our animal need to eat on a daily basis, the dinner party has become a familiar ritual in bourgeois culture. Buñuel claims the film is about repetition – that's why the emphasis is on eating and dreaming, the two daily activities we share with other animals but still consider uniquely human. Buñuel shows us how the repetition of these four activities (like the recurring aimless stroll) imposes narrative structure on our lives – whether it is the daily routines of eating and dreaming, or sex and death that bookend our lives.

This essay explores the interplay between the road and the room in Buñuel's narrative experimentation, and the way repetition is mobilized to reveal the inherent paradoxes within these narrative tropes. Both tropes suggest connections to other narrative forms. The room is the basic structure of theatre, an idea perhaps best articulated by playwright Harold Pinter in the 1960 program notes for his play titled *The Room* (first performed in 1957):

> Given a man in a room and he will sooner or later receive a visitor. … If two people inhabit the room the visitor will not be the same man for both. … A man in a room and no one entering lives in expectation of a visit … But however much it is expected, the entrance, when it comes, is unexpected and almost always unwelcome.

The road is the driving force of the epic, the novel, the road movie, and all other forms of picaresque fiction. Accentuating the contrast between theatre and epic and their respective pleasures, Aristotle preferred the emotional intensity generated by tragedy's unities of structure over the expansiveness of the epic's mixed form. This preference was fundamental to his hierarchy of genres, yet Spain's Golden Age literature excelled in both forms. Preferring paradoxical dialectics over frozen hierarchies, Buñuel adapted both literary forms to cinema, leveraging the distinctions between them, particularly as described by French film theorist André Bazin (1951).

> There can be no theater without architecture. … Whatever it is, the décor constitutes the walls of this three-sided box opening into the auditorium which we call the stage. … Because it is only part of the architecture of the stage, the décor of the theatre is thus an area materially enclosed, limited, circumscribed. … It is not the same with

> cinema, the basic principle of which is a denial of any frontiers to action. … There can be no cinema without the setting up of an open space in place of the universe rather than as part of it …; the cinematographic image can be emptied of all reality save one – the reality of space. (1951: 104–106)

This comparison evokes the radical differences between Buñuel's two earliest films: the theatricality of spatial confinement in *Un chien andalou* (An Andalusian Dog, 1929) versus the rambling spatial openness of *L'Âge d'or* (The Golden Age, 1930). These two lines of experimentation – with the room and the road, with the compression and expansion of narrative space – do not function as a binary. Rather, it is the dialectic interplay between them that intrigues Buñuel. For, it generates an array of diverse combinations that are not restricted to any particular cultural context (France, Spain, or Mexico), historical period (from the 1920s to the 1970s), or production regime (avant-garde, commercial industry, or European art film). They recur across his entire canon, which proved convenient for one who spent most of his life working in exile.

Buñuel's interplay between the room and the road is related to the distinction between the rhetorical tropes of metaphor (with its concentrated chain of fetishistic substitutions) and metonymy (with its endless juxtapositions), which Linda Williams (1981) used to connect his first and last pairs of films that bookend his career. She acknowledged these rhetorical figures were analogous to Freud's concepts of condensation and displacement from his dreamwork theory, which provided Buñuel with an alternative narrative infrastructure and, despite his disclaimer, a dialogic relationship with theory throughout his career. Equally resonant is the relation of these rhetorical figures to Gilles Deleuze's (1971) distinction between the masochistic and sadistic aesthetics: masochistic lovers trapped in a secret room (as in *Un chien andalou*, and *Cet obscur objet du désir*, 1977) versus the promiscuous sadist moving from one adventure to another (as in *L'Âge d'or* and *Le Fantôme de la liberté* [Phantom of Liberty, 1974]).

The Way In and the Way Out: *Un chien andalou* and *L'Âge d'or*

Buñuel's first two films, made in collaboration with surrealist painter Salvador Dalí in Paris, introduced two ways of spatializing narrative in an experimental mode. While *Un chien andalou* focuses on a pair of lovers confined within a cramped room, where eroticism is intensified by spatial restrictions, *L'Âge d'or* presents an open-ended, promiscuous, Sadean narrative that relentlessly drives forward from one location and genre to another and literally ends with the Marquis de Sade leaving an orgy.

Despite the fluidity of its dream logic, *Un chien andalou* emphasizes obstacles imposed by bourgeois culture and traditional narrative conventions, obstacles

designed to prevent gender-bending and sexual transgression. Inside the lovers' secret room, these obstacles are embodied in the cultural baggage that comically prevents the man from fulfilling his erotic desire – the piano, priests, and beasts of burden that drag him down. Like partners in the tango, the lovers perpetually struggle against each other, repeating the retaliatory moves that heighten the sexual tension between them. They are literally confined within this cramped room, which is oblivious to time – a reclusive space that may be repeatedly rewritten by narrativizing intertitles functioning as secondary revision but without being capable of change.

The film's only "road" sequences occur outside the window, when the "hero" rides up on his bicycle garbed in feminine attire and falls onto the pavement, and when the lovers watch an androgynous figure in the street below, staring at a dismembered hand and being run over by a car, actions that are all pointedly associated with castration and death. Although the room's portals – its doors and windows – lead onto an urban street scene, a lush landscape, and a breezy seascape, settings that cannot be logically reconciled with each other, these spatial contradictions become another means of locking the lovers within the secret room, as in a masochistic version of *l'amour fou* (at least according to Deleuze). It is as if all exteriors (real or imagined) inevitably lead back into this highly sexualized interior, the only place where the combative lovers are really alive. The final shot reveals them at the ocean's edge, buried to their waists in the sand, transformed into lifeless manikins devoid of genitals and unable to make love or to move. While subjectivity appears to be represented by the ongoing struggle within the interior rather than by the debilitating entrapment outside, the obstacles make mobility all the more desirable.

In contrast to this emphasis on spatial confinement, *L'Âge d'or* presents a catalogue of successive aggressive movements, from one genre or narrative field to another: territorial scorpions scurrying to kill each other in a science documentary, lethargic bandits pursuing internecine struggles in an ethnographic film, civilized Majorcans arriving by boat to confiscate the land in a colonial narrative, a captive lover being walked down urban streets as a *flâneur* in a modernist city symphony, peasants driving an oxcart through the drawing room in a class-crossed comedy of manners, bourgeois guests watching the gamekeeper shoot his disobedient son in a violent family melodrama, lovers escaping to the garden to commit sexual transgression in a perverse love story, flaming objects being thrown out of a two-storey window to express frustration in a transgressive avant-garde interlude, and sadists walking out of a castle after a violent orgy in a pornographic finale, leaving only the dead bodies and scalps of their young female victims behind. Everyone in the film refuses to get stuck in one place – unless they are dead (like the victims in the orgy). The others are always moving on to a new terrain – to new victims, new lovers, new spectators, and new technologies (the coming of sound). Deleuze (1971) associates this constant mobility with the sadistic aesthetic of Buñuel's hero, the Marquis de Sade, who freely imagined a profusion of new

violations. Distinguished from the devoted slave who manipulated the frozen world of the masochistic aesthetic (frequently within the secret room), the sadist mastered an alternative form of *l'amour fou*, in which mobility, humor, and obscenity prevailed. By the end of *L'Âge d'or*, the lovers have parted ways, the weak contenders have been subdued, and only the comic Sadean hero survives.

L'Âge d'or prefigured Buñuel's life as an exile, who moved to one foreign context after another (France, the United States, and Mexico) and had to deal with new restrictions in each culture that kept artistic liberty a phantom. Yet, this experience must have made him appreciate picaresque fiction where modular episodes are unified only by the presence of the central character, who is similarly forced to move on to the next adventure. According to historian Henry Kamen (2008), when viewed through the perspective of Spanish picaresque fiction, Spain's historical experience of recurrent exile was perceived not as "deprivation," but "an enrichment and a liberation," a dynamic that might explain why Buñuel was increasingly drawn to this form. Russian theorist M.M. Bakhtin (1981), in his writings on satire and the episodic novel, offered even stronger arguments for this perceptual shift on exile, claiming that transnational comparisons and the awareness of "alien discourses" weakens the ideological hold of any hegemonic power over language:

> Consciousness awakens to independent ideological life precisely in a world of alien discourses surrounding it, and from which it cannot initially separate itself … This verbal-ideological decentering will occur only when a national culture loses its sealed off and self-sufficient character, when it becomes conscious of itself as only one among *other* cultures and languages. It is this knowledge that will sap the roots of a mythological feeling for language, based as it is on an absolute fusion of ideological meaning with language. (1981: 360, 369–370, emphasis in original)

It was these transnational dynamics of ideological awakening that Buñuel would dramatize both in the room and on the road.

Insiders and Outsiders: The Transnational Remix in *Las Hurdes* and *Los olvidados*

As Buñuel's first solo effort as a director and his first film made in Spain, *Las Hurdes*, aka *Tierra sin pan* (Land without Bread, 1933), brought the surrealist aesthetic home and invented the surrealistic documentary in the process. On the eve of his own exile, it is also the first film that acknowledges his own complicity with bourgeois culture. This exilic perspective helps us understand the movements in *Las Hurdes*, where a group of filmmakers travel to a desolate region of Spain to document a dismal way of life. Here the tensions exist not between a pair of lovers but between outsiders and insiders who also function as masters and slaves.

In *Las Hurdes*, the filmmakers and spectators are the ones on a journey, while the Hurdanos are stuck in a village so impoverished and confining that even smoke cannot escape from their miserable one-room dwellings. When they do try to leave, their efforts are futile – at least according to the "yes, but" rhetorical structures imposed by the outsider's voice-over narration. They go to the city to sell their wares, but return without money; they are forced to eat unripe fruit, but suffer dysentery as a consequence; their snake bites are not fatal, until they try to treat them. By the end of the film the filmmakers and spectators are eager to return to their own culture, but the film enables us to see that it is merely a larger version of the same corrupt structure that has entrapped the Hurdanos – a dynamic that would become more explicit in *El ángel exterminador* through the use of repetition.

While the filmmakers are on the road, what they discover and document is the futility of movement and the impossibility of escape, both for the insider and the outsider, the local villager and the global traveler. The filmmakers fool themselves into thinking they can make a difference, that they are not part of the exploitation. After his move to Mexico, Buñuel continued to use this interplay between the road and the room to regain world attention. Determined he would not be forgotten, in *Los olvidados* (The Forgotten Ones, aka The Young and the Damned, 1950) he uses Mexico City as an urban center with dire social problems like other world-class cities – a city in which he was still an outsider. The film begins with Jaibo, a young delinquent who has just been released from the reformatory, returning to the streets where he is free to resume his life, but his desire for revenge and his feelings of having been cheated lead him back into his old life-patterns of crime. His younger friend Pedro, on the other hand, seeks refuge in the enclosed spaces that seem to offer escape from the mean streets – to the foundry where he pursues a job with a future, to the reformatory where he wins the director's trust, and above all to his own household where he continues to seek love from his embittered mother. Sometimes the meanings of the room and the road are reversed, as in the reform school, where Pedro has been confined but which he perceives as a possible route to redemption, yet he is forced back on the road by Jaibo's bullying. In all of these interiors, Pedro's chances are thwarted by Jaibo, who forces him to share his violent fate in the streets. As in *Tristana*, both the freedom of the road and the refuge of the room prove to be merely phantoms.

As in *Las Hurdes*, the problems are too deeply systemic to be solved by individual acts of kindness (from a filmmaker or bureaucrat) or by neorealist solutions (of liberal reform and family forgiveness). They demand radical change – a need underscored by the surrealistic touches that jolt us out of our complacency and false hope. Despite their moral differences as antagonists, there is an uncanny similarity between Pedro's Oedipal dream of reaching for his mother's raw meat, which is stolen by Jaibo who hides under the kitchen table like a stray dog; and Jaibo's final vision of a mangy dog crouching on his chest as he lies dying in the street, calling out for his mother. The similarity is deeply disturbing because

it suggests not only that Jaibo and Pedro share a common subjectivity, but that they both could turn out to be either the new lover in the secret room or the mad dog killed in the street.

Narrative Vehicles in Mexican Road Movies

After his international success with *Los olvidados*, Buñuel introduced narrative vehicles as visual puns in two commercial Mexican road movies: *Subida al cielo* (Ascent to Heaven, aka Mexican Bus Ride, 1951) and *La ilusión viaja en tranvía* (Illusion Takes the Streetcar, 1953). Although he had earlier used the car that runs down the androgyne in *Un chien andalou* and the oxcart that drives through the elegant parlor in *L'Âge d'or* as surrealist jolts, this was the first time he used vehicles to structure the narrative and motorize picaresque fiction.

As vehicles of public conveyance, the bus and streetcar structure the narrative as a picaresque journey, yet their cramped interiors also double as the inns or literary stopping points along the way – a spatial compression that strains social relations among the passengers. These narratives combine not only the road and the room but also the *pícaro* and the ensemble, which made them effective vehicles for social satire. This satiric potential was developed more fully in *La ilusión viaja en tranvía*, where, according to Buñuel, one can see the social cityscape through the windows.

> We see diverse aspects of Mexican social reality along the streetcar's route: the poor neighborhoods, the butchers from the Rastro slaughterhouse, the black marketers … It's possible to find people carrying boxes of fruit or live turkeys – the most incredible things – on public vehicles in Mexico, … that's why I thought that workers from Rastro should travel on the streetcar carrying quarters of beef, and sanctimonious old women carrying an image of a saint. (Cited in de la Colina and Pérez Turrent, 1992: 108)

While *La ilusión viaja en tranvía* explores the conflicts among these passengers, *Subida al cielo* emphasizes the individual protagonist. Oliverio is on a time-bound quest to find a notary who can ratify the will of his dying mother before he can marry his fiancé Albina. As in *Los olvidados*, Buñuel inserts surrealistic elements into a realistic context, which (he claims) is "precisely what Surrealism did" (Cited in de la Colina and Pérez Turrent, 1992: 109). This surrealist strategy helped *La ilusión viaja en tranvía* win the International Critics Award for the Best Avant-Garde Film at Cannes.

Evoking surrealistic paintings by Frida Kahlo from the 1940s, Oliverio dreams of being connected to his mother by a spiraling orange peel that stretches to him like an umbilical cord and that he holds in his mouth like a pacifier, as the ultimate fetish. He also dreams of making love with the seductive passenger Raquel in the middle of a jungle growing inside the bus, with sheep passing between them.

When the bus gets stuck in the river, Buñuel relies on a supernatural solution. "It came to me during the shooting to have a little girl arrive with an oxcart and, with hardly any effort, manage to get the bus out of the jam. Later, this is the girl we see dead in the coffin the father carries on the bus" (cited in de la Colina and Pérez Turrent, 1992: 75). We also saw a child's coffin carry a dead girl downstream to the cemetery in *Las Hurdes*. But here in *Subida al cielo* these surrealistic images are balanced by the social reality that other passengers bring on board.

Buñuel realized these narrative vehicles could represent both a physical journey through social space and an interior trip driven by desire. He would explore this use of narrative vehicles (cars, trains, and horse-drawn carriages) for an interior journey much more fully in *Él* (*This Strange Passion*, a film made in 1952 between the two Mexican road movies) and in *Belle de jour* (the film that launched his final period of filmmaking in France). The vehicle of public conveyance that proved best suited to convey subjectivity was the train. For, not only could it display a succession of interior images (as in a mental train of thoughts) but, given its class divisions in seating, it could reveal deep-seated class antagonism. Even in *El ángel exterminador*, Buñuel's ultimate "room" film, the bourgeois ensemble acts as if its entrapment were caused by a disaster (like a train-wreck or shipwreck) rather than a failure of will and accuses the fleeing servants of being rats who deserted the ship. Comparing their situation to a train-wreck, one of the female guests exposes her own class-bound mentality by describing a train-wreck she once saw: "The third-class compartment, full of common people, had been squashed like a huge accordion. And inside … what carnage! I must be insensitive, because the suffering of those poor people didn't move me at all."

These class-bound connections with the train recur throughout Buñuel's canon. In *Él*, the train carries Don Francisco and his bride on their honeymoon and introduces his manic-depressive behavior that turns their marriage into a nightmare. Although they travel first class, the spatial confinement of their compartment puts pressure on Francisco, who begins to reveal the depth of his paranoia. This use of the train – both to expose class relations and reveal subjectivity – built on Buñuel's earlier experimentation with these humbler vehicles of public conveyance, the bus and the streetcar, in his Mexican road movies.

Interestingly, what Buñuel sees as the strongest similarity between the two Mexican road movies is not their narrative vehicles but their use of narrative compression to rupture the realism. As he puts it: "The number of incidents that would normally happen on several journeys are collected into a single trip. Reality is not usually so concentrated" (cited in de la Colina and Pérez Turrent, 1992: 76). It is this line of experimentation – this interweaving of many mini-stories within an open-ended narrative – that soon leads him to combine picaresque fiction with the religious pilgrimage. This combination was already suggested in *Subida al cielo* through the miraculous recovery of the bus from the river and through the film's title (Ascent to Heaven), and in *La ilusión viaja en tranvía*, through the presence of the saint on the streetcar. But before he turned to the religious road movie, he first explored the inward journey into subjectivity.

Internalizing the Narrative Vehicle and Eroticizing the Room: From *Él* to *Belle de jour*

In both *Él* and *Belle de jour*, narrative vehicles function as time travel, rupturing the linear plot as they freely move backward and forward in space and time, transporting both characters and spectators on physical and mental journeys. The confining cars and train in *Él* prove as frustrating as the architectural structures in thwarting the desires of the paranoid protagonist. In *Belle de jour*, the horse-drawn carriage and Parisian brothel, representing the road and the room, provide two rival sites of erotic fantasy for the masochistic protagonist, who searches for ways to combine them. In both films, the increasing internalization of both the road and the room intensifies their respective versions of *l'amour fou*.

Él begins where *El ángel exterminador* ends – in the immersive recesses of a Mexican cathedral packed with worshipers. But this time it is Holy Week being celebrated and the wordless ritual succeeds in demonstrating how an individual's erotic desire can become perverted. As the officiating priest kisses the bare foot of an androgynous young peasant, we see Don Francisco literally twist his gaze from that holy spectacle of abasement to the fetishistic black suede pumps of the woman, Gloria, with whom he is already in the process of becoming erotically obsessed. The music, chanting, incense, and spatial crowding make this hothouse interior of the cathedral all the more immersive and dreamlike. They transform it into a communal version of the eroticized secret room – an ideal setting for igniting a perverted version of *l'amour fou*.

As soon as Don Francisco rushes out of the cathedral in pursuit of Gloria, he faces the first of many narrative ruptures. He is confronted by the church fathers, whose ironic words awaken him from his erotic reverie by questioning the reason for his urgency: "If it's important, then a Christian has no business doing it." At that moment an automobile drives up and carries Gloria out of sight and out of reach. It is the first of several narrative vehicles that will change the course of the story, creating a recurring zigzag pattern that twists the lines of the plot as decisively as Francisco's gaze and desire were twisted in the church.

Other narrative vehicles soon appear – not only private cars but also the train that carries them on their honeymoon, and where the zigzag pattern is first displayed as a concrete image. The zigzag becomes associated with Francisco's wild swings of mood: between arrogance and self-abasement, between accusations and abject apologies that define his manic-depressive subjectivity. Francisco's demented train of thought can never be derailed from the deeply disturbing zigzag that he first experienced in the church, as his slanting gaze was first enthralled by Gloria's fetishistic shoe.

Private automobiles also mark and help smooth over the ruptures in the narrative. The first time we see the car of Gloria's former fiancé, Raúl, we are confused because we don't yet understand how much time has passed within the narrative

ellipsis (between Francisco's transgressive kiss of Gloria in the garden when she was still engaged to Raúl, and her accidental encounter with Raúl several months after her marriage). Although Raúl's car nearly runs Gloria down in the street, it soon becomes a safe haven where she can tell him her inset narrative about her nightmarish marriage to Francisco. Signaling another narrative rupture, the car reappears in the final sequence, where it carries Raúl and Gloria (who are now married) and their young son (who may be the result of their adulterous relationship or Francisco's biological child) to visit Francisco in the monastery where he is confined.

While these narrative vehicles carry us across the temporal gaps and dramatic ruptures in the narrative, the confining rooms intensify the ups and downs of Francisco's insane jealousy and manic-depressive paranoia. Evoking the modernist architecture of Antonio Gaudí, his father's house does not have a single straight line. This is where he lures Gloria and where he kisses her in the garden, a kiss that not only ruptures her relationship with Raúl but also disrupts the linear drive of the narrative. Once we return to this house in Gloria's flashback, we see how he imprisons her in its slanted rooms. Even on their honeymoon, Francisco feels the pressure of their hotel room in Guanajuato, imagining it is being penetrated by her former lovers who are peeping through the keyhole or listening through the porous walls. It is as if he wants to seal them both off together in a tomb, blocking all portals. The rooms that have the most powerful effect on his psyche are those associated with the church: the cathedral, where his erotic obsession begins and where he finally breaks down and attacks the priest; the church tower, where the overview inspires him with delusions of grandeur and arouses his desire to kill Gloria; and the monastery where he is finally confined and where his zigzag walk up the pathway reveals he is as demented as ever.

Unlike *Los olvidados* and *Subida al cielo*, *Él* bombed at the box office, yet it elicited words of praise from French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, who used the film to illustrate his own theories of paranoia. This response encouraged Buñuel to continue his ongoing dialogue with theory: "My only consolation came from Jacques Lacan, who saw the film at a special screening for psychiatrists at the Cinémathèque in Paris and praised certain of its psychological truths. In Mexico, *Él* was nothing short of disastrous" (Buñuel, 1983: 204). He continued this line of psychological exploration in *Belle de jour*, this time choosing female masochism rather than male paranoia as his primary focus, but still relying on the interplay between the road and the room to reveal not only the dynamics of desire but also the way it was intensified by class conflict.

In *Belle de jour* the vehicle of public conveyance (an old-fashioned horse-drawn carriage) provides entry into the subjectivity of the singular female protagonist Séverine, whose erotic life and desires are explored. As she freely moves between a luxurious Parisian apartment she shares with her husband, and an urban brothel where she works under the assumed name of Belle, her class mobility (like her dual identity as frigid wife and masochistic whore) heightens the sexual pleasures

she experiences in secret rooms, whether servicing a vulgar tradesman or a decadent duke. Significantly, it is the picaresque street-thug Marcel who provides her with the greatest pleasure but who ultimately shares Jaibo's fate – being shot down in the street like a stray dog. Thus Belle faces the same forked paths that were earlier available to Tristana – choosing between the mad dog (who, like Jaibo and Marcel, threatens to contaminate everyone he encounters), or her handsome, disabled young husband Pierre, who (like Tristana's French husband Horacio) cannot satisfy her deviant desires that were possibly unleashed by her sexual victimization as a child. These desires remain as mysterious as the contents of the little black box that her Orientalized customer brings to the brothel, providing Belle with inscrutable pleasure and the narrative with delicious irony. Though this foreign fetish belongs to the supply-and-demand dynamics of consumer capitalism and to a transnational erotic desire, its sense of mystery evokes the third context for fetishism – religious ritual, which played a crucial role in *Él*. It is this realm that is explored in Buñuel's religious quest films that were also launched by his Mexican road movies.

Going on a Pilgrimage or Holding Your Sacred Ground

In Buñuel's four most sacrilegious films, the central character is deeply religious and the conflict between orthodoxy and heresy intense. Yet, the interplay between movement and stasis, the road and the room, is still central.

Two of these works are religious road movies. *Nazarín* (1958) tells the story of (in Buñuel's words) "an exceptional priest who wants to live in agreement with the spirit and letter of original Christianity" (cited in de la Colina and Pérez Turrent, 1992: 133). But given the corruption of the world he lives in (the Mexico of Porfirio Díaz), he is forced to leave the Church, for his good deeds "only beget conflicts and disasters." Although he gives everything he has to others and willingly forgives their sins, these actions do not win the admiration of the Church nor the gratitude of those he seeks to help. *La Voie lactée* (1969) presents a pilgrimage that moves freely between France and Spain, present and past, piety and sacrilege, documentary and Surrealism. Both films were made in exile – the former in Mexico and the latter in France – but both are deeply rooted in Spain.

The character Nazarín, played by Spanish actor Francisco Rabal, is a quixotic priest who was born in Spain and who, at the end of the film, hears the drums of Calanda, a unique sound from Buñuel's home village that "seems to echo some secret rhythm in the outside world, and provokes a real physical shiver that defies the rational mind" (Buñuel, 1983: 20). Like *Tristana*, it is based on a novel by Benito Pérez Galdós, one of Buñuel's favorite Spanish writers. The film adaptation does little to acknowledge the move to a Mexican locale; it merely transfers the present-day conflict to the time of Porfirio Díaz. Partly because the film was so widely

misunderstood (particularly by the faithful who failed to recognize its subversive dimensions), Buñuel claims: "Of all the films I made in Mexico, *Nazarín* is one of my favorites" (1983: 215).

In *La Voie lactée*, a pair of *pícaros* of different generations (evoking the thuggish Marcel and his elder Spanish accomplice played by Rabal in *Belle de jour*) make a pilgrimage from France to Spain, and in the process reveal a catalogue of religious heresies. More specifically, their destination is the shrine of St James in the city of Santiago de Compostela, which draws thousands of pilgrims to Spain every year. The journey shows how dead saints and scriptures can be exhumed from the past and remobilized as transgressive objects of desire, particularly when positioned within unlikely contemporary contexts (e.g., an elegant restaurant where the maître d' argues with his staff over fine points of orthodoxy, and a student recital in an exclusive suburban school where "anathemas" are voiced by pampered little girls in uniform). The film reminds us that all of "the texts and citations are taken from the Scriptures, modern and ancient works on theology and ecclesiastical history," yet (like the purity of Nazarín's Christian behavior) it is their spatial and temporal re-envoicement within modern settings that exposes their absurdity as well as the material and moral limits of the contemporary locale.

The violation of boundaries is most extreme on the register of time. For not only does *La Voie lactée* reference the recent political uprisings of May '68 (which provide another context for testing these scriptural citations), but it also performs an ingenious form of time travel that mobilizes familiar narrative devices (like flashbacks) and common objects (like clothes and beards) to freely move from one century to another and recast modern characters as Jesus and Mary. Despite the film's preoccupation with religious subjects, it pushes the picaresque structure to such an extreme abstraction that we cannot miss its politically subversive potential. As in *Nazarín*, it is this free movement on the road, both spatially and temporally, that most effectively exposes the pervasiveness of corruption and the ineffectuality of pure virtue.

The protagonists of the other two religious films, *Viridiana* (1961) and *Simón del desierto* (Simon of the Desert, 1965), are religious fanatics who are stubbornly committed to immobility: they resist temptation and modernity by holding on to their own holy ground, but still risk losing their faith. In *Simón del desierto* (a film never finished), the saint is literally immobile – living on a column in the desert, resisting all temptations of the flesh, including food and drink and a bearded Silvia Pinal playing not the pious nun Viridiana nor the virginal Valkyrie, but the Devil as a woman. Though Simon's body remains immobile, his mind still wanders. At the end of the film, it transports him to the future where he confronts the youth culture from the mid-1960s, whose pop music also threatens the virginal Viridiana. As in *La Voie lactée*, this leap provides a form of time travel – but by moving forward rather than backward (as in *La Voie lactée*), the ending now seems dated, forever stuck in its own time.

The issue of getting stuck is more complex for Viridiana, a nun who doesn't want to leave the convent but is urged by her Mother Superior to go visit her rich uncle before taking her final vows. After her traumatic visit with her uncle (who may have raped her), she insists on returning to the convent where (like Simón on his column) she will be safe from temptation. But, just before stepping onto the local bus (a narrative vehicle that would have carried her to a different resolution of the plot), she is detained by the local officials and gets stuck at her uncle's estate. She is stopped by Don Jaime's suicide (which he purposely designed to entrap her), by the material inheritance he left her (which is the reason the Mother Superior insisted on her going to her Uncle's in the first place), and by her cousin Jorge (a modern Spaniard whom she had insisted should be acknowledged by her uncle). In contrast to Viridiana, who bestows charity and forgiveness on venal beggars who are totally sacrilegious and corrupt, Jorge shows his moral worth by trying to modernize Spain. In one sequence on the road, he condemns the cruel practice of tying a dog to a cart, but has to buy the dog in order to gain its freedom. As soon as he performs this rescue, he sees another dog chained to a cart going in the opposite direction. This quixotic road sequence is similar to one in *Nazarín*, where he offers to work for free but ends up being attacked as a scab by the workers who expect to get paid. The actions of all three do-gooders raise the question: how do you make a meaningful intervention in a totally corrupt society?

As I argued in *Blood Cinema* (Kinder, 1993), we can also see *Nazarín* and *Viridiana* as a quixotic pair, since both deal with the ironic disillusionment of a Good Samaritan who tries to aid the poor but whose religious passion arouses erotic desire in others less devout. The connection was strengthened by having Francisco Rabal, the Spanish actor who was Nazarín, also play the sardonic cousin who finally triumphs over Viridiana. In the final scene Viridiana goes to Jorge's room, where she finds him playing cards with the maid and listening to pop music. Though she had previously resisted him, she now docilely enters his room (like the sacrificial lambs in *El ángel exterminador*), giving up her faith and becoming another pawn in his game. Similarly, at the end of *Nazarín*, when he is "overwhelmed by [his] failure as a priest and as a man," an ordinary woman offers him a pineapple out of pity. Though he at first refuses it out of pride, he then accepts it and breaks into tears, realizing the futility of his lifelong struggle and sacrifice. This is the moment when he hears, not contemporary rock 'n' roll, but the maddening drums of Calanda. Both are apparently liberated from their religious obsession, yet it is hard to say whether that improves or worsens their situation.

The fate of both films proved to be outside of Buñuel's control. Although *Viridiana* was Spain's official entry at the Cannes film festival, where it won the Palme d'Or, it was condemned by the Vatican and banned in Spain for 16 years, forcing Buñuel to change its nationality from Spanish to Mexican, as he had changed his own nationality years earlier. Yet, *Nazarín*, a film he was forced to make in Mexico rather than Spain, was misread and, ironically, rewarded as a consequence.

> At the Cannes Festival … where [*Nazarín*] won the Grand Prix International, it almost received the Prix de l'Office Catholique as well. Three members of the jury argued passionately for it, but, happily, they were in the minority. … After the election of Pope John XXIII, I was actually invited to New York, where the abominable Spellman's successor, Cardinal Somebody-or-Other, wanted to give me an award for the film. (Buñuel, 1983: 216)

The Final Radical Remix: *Le Fantôme de la liberté* and *Cet obscur objet du désir*

The dialectic of the road and the room returns with great force in Buñuel's last two films, *Le Fantôme de la liberté* and *Cet obscur objet du désir*, where each trope is pushed to its ultimate limits and enriched by intertextual dialogues with works by others. In *Le Fantôme de la liberté* the primary dialogue is with *The Saragossa Manuscript*, the 1965 film by Polish director Wojciech Has, based on Jan Potocki's Polish novel, *The Manuscript Found in Saragossa* (1815), both of which Buñuel "adored." In his autobiography he claims, "I saw this film a record-breaking three times and convinced Alatriste to buy it for Mexico in exchange for *Simón of the Desert*" (Buñuel, 1983: 224).

Like *Le Fantôme de la liberté*, *The Saragossa Manuscript* opens on the battlefield of the Napoleonic wars, where both Spanish and French combatants are distracted by a building and a book. In Has's film it is an inn where a fleeing Spanish soldier seeks respite from the war and discovers a book, containing images and stories, about his grandfather. When a French officer enters the room, he becomes equally caught up in the book and they are both recruited as readers of the tales that follow, which temporarily suspend the violent conflict between them. Thus, the historic battle won by the French is converted into merely a frame for a series of picaresque adventures that focuses primarily on Spaniards (and Muslims). While the room at the inn provides sanctuary from the war outside, its spatial confinement can be escaped through the powers of fiction – inset stories and images that carry us readers to other genres and locations, including a pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela. This pilgrimage is merely a brief reference in *The Saragossa Manuscript*, but it becomes the central narrative frame in *La Voie lactée*. In all three films these embedded tales enable us to time travel into the past, where we inevitably get stuck. Yet, according to Buñuel, unlike *The Saragossa Manuscript* and *La Voie lactée*, which feature central *pícaros*, in *Le Fantôme de la liberté* "we no longer find any continuous characters who serve to interconnect the stories. They have their small story and depart so that a new character can enter with a new story" (de la Colina and Pérez Turrent, 1992: 196). Thus narrative mobility is pushed to sheer abstraction, as in a Road Runner cartoon, moving beyond the conventions of picaresque fiction into the realms of narratology.

In *Le Fantôme de la liberté* (a film made in France by a Spaniard), the Napoleonic conflict is extended over a series of printed texts and images that reinforce rather than distract us from the battle. One of the first images we see is Goya's painting, *El tres de mayo de 1808* (The Third of May 1808), as a printed title informs us: "The action of this film begins in Toledo, in 1808, during the occupation of the city by Napoleon's troops. Inspired by a tale by Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer, a Spanish romantic poet." Although the French may have the upper hand on the battlefield, the representations of the war are controlled by Spaniards – even though Buñuel (dressed as a modest monk) is one of the prisoners executed by a French firing squad, as if bringing Goya's painting to life.

Rather than the country inn typical of picaresque fiction, the building here is a church, where the conflict escalates between the French officer who commits sacrilege against not only the holy wafers and wine (the body and blood of Christ) but also the corpse of the lovely Spanish noblewoman in her tomb. To protest against these violations, the Spaniards reassert their control: the statue of her husband hits the French officer, changing the genre from historic epic to gothic romance, and an unidentified off-screen female voice-over intrudes, describing the miracle that kept the dead lady's face as fresh as a rose. Once we cut to a contemporary scene in a Parisian park, we realize that this woman (a Spanish nanny) is reading the romantic tale by Bécquer aloud to her French counterpart (who is busy knitting, like Madame Lafarge). Like the Saragossa manuscript, this book now transports us out of the battlefield into a new chronotope – from Spain to France, and from the nineteenth century to the present, where (instead of getting stuck as we did at the end of *Simón del desierto*) we are now free to move from one episode to another.

What Buñuel adopts from *The Saragossa Manuscript* is this extreme flexibility of narrative embedding which is a defining convention in picaresque fiction, one that generates dramatic shifts in content, tone, and genre and thereby denaturalizes the dominance of any narrative regime. Both texts not only look back to medieval collections of tales (like those by Boccaccio and Chaucer) but also forward to interactive games (where avatars are frequently embroiled in battles and players keep trying to escape a spatial trap as they find their way to the next level).

Once Buñuel's *Le Fantôme de la liberté* cuts to the Parisian park, the conflict between France and Spain is reduced to the nationality of the two nannies – the Spanish reader and French listener – who both represent a lower class than that of their bourgeois employers and prepubescent charges. This weave of discursive registers is emphasized when the Spanish nanny asks her companion to define the word *paraphernalia*, and receives a detailed response worthy of a linguist or ethnographer. As it addresses fine distinctions of gender and nationality, it violates our assumptions about what a person of her class is likely to know. These class distinctions and power dynamics are reinstated once the narrative follows the Spanish nanny home to the household of the Foucaulds, a name whose errant spelling does not prevent us from connecting them to theorist Michel Foucault, particularly when they unjustly fire their servant and pretend they could not do otherwise.

This amusing yet rigorous attention to discourse enables us to see that Buñuel is leading us into the deep structure of non-linear narrative that underlies picaresque fiction. For, as Susan Suleiman (1978) argued, in an essay that applied the narrative theory of Roman Jakobson to understand the unique narrative experimentation of *Le Fantôme de la liberté*, syntactically the film has a perfect hyper-linearity as it always follows a narrative agent or object from one sequence to another, yet its misreading of semantic binaries creates ironic disjunctions and absurd ruptures – for example, socializing the wrong end of the digestive process (defecating rather than dining), or having the wrong outcome follow the guilty verdict at the murder trial of the sniper (dismissal rather than death), or searching for the lost little girl (because she is present rather than absent). We find ourselves concerned not only with structural choices (which character or object to follow into the next tale) but also with semantic decisions about the meaning of specific words (paraphernalia and pornography, guilt and innocence, freedom and tyranny). To explain these discursive challenges, Buñuel's Professor cites the relativism of cultural contexts and explicitly references Margaret Mead – an explanation also relevant to the disjunctive rhetoric of *Las Hurdes*. But in this film the semantic ruptures resonate more powerfully with Bakhtin, who showed how they denaturalize the truth-value of all language, both verbal and visual.

Although the narrative experimentation in *Le Fantôme de la liberté* moves beyond picaresque fiction, it demonstrates the power of its conventions in combining the road and the room – most brilliantly in the sequence at the inn. As in most picaresque tales, at some point the *pícaro* stops at a country inn to spend the night. Although each inn introduces new narrative possibilities – by combining public and private space and introducing a new array of characters – it provides the room where *pícaros* frequently become entrapped. In this case, the guest at the inn is not a *pícaro* living by his wits, but a bourgeois nurse going to see her dying father, reminding us that death lies at the end of all of our journeys. Yet picaresque fiction frequently convinces us that it is possible to escape any narrative situation – even if you are losing a war (like the Spanish officer in *The Saragossa Manuscript*), or are shot dead (like the characters in *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie*), or diagnosed with cancer (like a character in *Le Fantôme de la liberté*) – because you can always escape into another story. This is the ultimate use of an expanding middle to forestall a premature death (as theorized by Peter Brooks in *Reading for the Plot* [1984] and as performed by Scheherazade in *The Arabian Nights*).

In *Le Fantôme de la liberté*, the traditional inn becomes both a model of database narrative and a microcosm for the film's overall structure. The rooms off the upstairs hallway provide a visualization of the mini-stories that compete for control over the narrative. As guests take turns using the WC, doors repeatedly open and slam shut as they rush in and out of the hallway and into the foreground of the main narrative. Yet, Buñuel's camera can choose to follow any of these characters into a separate room and tale. For example, it visits the nurse as she entertains a group of Dominican monks who help her pray for her dying father,

a prayer meeting that turns into a game of poker, which provides another model of database narrative. As cards are shuffled and dealt and as players bet Medals, Virgins, and Sacred Hearts, we realize all the characters and their perversions can be similarly categorized into suits (Dominicans or Franciscans, masochists or sadists, incestuous aunts or nephews). Even spectators are carefully chosen, for although everyone is invited to watch the whipping of the masochist by his maitresse, these performers prefer to outrage the monks. When tales are combined, they draw attention to the formal paradigms of sound/image and national identities of Spain/France, especially when a Spanish flamenco dancer and guitarist in one room provide erotic background music for the incestuous French couple down the hall and when their music is rejected by the masochist, who rudely shuts the door to their room.

Although this remix of rooms is compelling, it is the endless nomadic movement of the narrative that is most striking in *Le Fantôme de la liberté*, "one that passes from one thing to another through some small detail" (cited in de la Colina and Pérez Turrent, 1992: 196). Despite its radical unpredictability, Buñuel makes this structure look simple to achieve. The linear drive is accelerated by narrative engines – not only by speeding cars that get tickets and cause collisions and by planes that drown out political lines of dialogue, but also by visualizing machines (cameras, X-rays, rifles, and dreams) that target chosen subjects whose images are easily stitched together. Despite its radical transgression of the boundaries between cultures, centuries, and genres and the borders between life and death, the narrative still coheres. For, the film begins and ends with a massacre, one witnessed by human storytellers (in the opening Napoleonic execution scene in Spain), the other by animals (in the final contemporary battle with student activists at the Paris zoo). No matter how amusing its tone and no matter how many episodes expand its middle, like all stories, this open-ended narrative still inevitably ends in death.

Those Obscure Dynamics of Desire

Whereas *Le Fantôme de la liberté* generated a productive dialogue with a film Buñuel adored, *Cet obscur objet du désir* cultivates a rivalry with a film he abhorred – Josef von Sternberg's *The Devil Is a Woman* (1935), starring Marlene Dietrich – for both were adaptations of the same French novel, Pierre Louÿs's *La Femme et le pantin* (The Woman and the Puppet, 1898). In his autobiography Buñuel disparages Sternberg's claims to originality, insisting he was always too predictable: "Sternberg's choice of subject matter was not exactly distinguished; he was notorious for basing his movies on cheap melodramas" (Buñuel, 1983: 132). In his own adaptation, Buñuel leverages theories of desire to show how such commonplace material can be radically transformed.

Just as *Le Fantôme de la liberté* pushes the nomadic flexibility of picaresque fiction to its illogical yet amusing limits (even beyond those earlier transgressed in *L'Âge d'or*), *Cet obscur objet du désir* performs a similar process on *l'amour fou* and its underlying dynamics of desire. In contrast to his earlier explorations of these dynamics in *Él* and *Belle de jour*, where the emphasis was on the subjective inner life of the deviant protagonists, here the emphasis is more external and spatialized, as in *Un chien andalou*.

The romance between Don Mateo and Conchita is as absurd as the interaction between the lovers in *Un chien andalou*. Thus, instead of reading this film for the story or for insight into its perverse characters (as we might read *The Devil Is a Woman*), we are encouraged to read it for what it reveals about the dynamics of desire – how it functions within the cramped domestic spaces of melodrama, how it leverages fetishism in the film's visual style and systems of substitution, and how it remixes the interplay between the room and the road. For even the train, that narrative vehicle of public conveyance which Buñuel had earlier used in *Él*, now functions not to reveal a train of subjective images but to provide a practical means of shuttling Don Mateo and Conchita between France and Spain, love and hate, empowerment and humiliation, while delineating their identities across registers of nationality, class, gender, and generation. Most important, the train provides Don Mateo with a proper setting for telling his version of his perverse relationship with Conchita, a narration shaped by social class.

The film opens with Don Mateo buying a first-class train ticket from Spain to Paris. Just as Gloria told the flashback narrative of her nightmarish marriage to Don Francisco in a private car within *Él*, Don Mateo tells the story of his sadomasochistic, class-crossed relationship with Conchita within his first-class compartment on the train. Acting as his narratees, those sharing his compartment not only belong to the French bourgeoisie as he does but they also have mutual friends or turn out to be Don Mateo's neighbors, sharing a neighborhood whose inhabitants are restricted to a certain race and class. Despite the mobility of these passengers, they are stuck in class positions and frozen attitudes – like the guests in *El ángel exterminador*. They include a judge (who is a close friend of Don Mateo's cousin), a psychologist dwarf (whose size, despite his perceptiveness, brings the English term "shrink" to mind), and a bourgeois mother (whose young daughter asks the hermeneutic question that sets the narrative in motion but is then banished to the corridor since she is too young to hear this X-rated story). Not only are these listeners sympathetic to Don Mateo's side but they understand that Conchita is an object both of his desire and contempt, contradictory feelings that intensify each other. They see her lower-class status as both part of her erotic appeal and the reason why he sensibly won't marry her. They are as biased as Raúl (Gloria's former fiancé in *Él*) in accepting his version of the story, which might make us question the class dynamics of our own response. But at least, we are not as insensitive as the woman in *El ángel exterminador* who witnessed the train-wreck and felt no sympathy for the lower-class carnage.

The most striking absurdity in the story is the use of two different actresses to play Conchita: one Spanish (Ángela Molina), who looks voluptuously low class; the other French (Carole Bouquet), who appears more delicately bourgeois. Although this doubling might bring to mind the dual identities of the female protagonist in *Belle de jour* (Séverine and Belle), there it told us something about the character and her subjectivity, whereas here, like the double casting of the Chief of Police and Minister of the Interior in *Le Fantôme de la liberté*, it draws our attention to the fundamental artificiality of Buñuel's characters. Instead of being presented as three-dimensional individuals with whom we can identify, his characters are avatars or subject positions, which are only temporarily occupied by actors. Within the fictional world of *Cet obscur objet du désir*, this doubling of Conchita apparently makes no difference to Don Mateo, who is too self-absorbed to notice. But for us spectators, whose attention is consistently drawn to the dynamics of desire, it reveals the endless chain of substitutions that lie at the heart of fetishism.

Conchita occupies a number of subject positions, some of which are hard to reconcile: a maid in Don Mateo's household, a hat-check girl in a French restaurant, a flamenco dancer in a Spanish nightclub, a member of a European terrorist group, a wayward daughter of a devoutly religious mother, and an innocent young daughter sold by her impoverished mother to a rich older man. In one scene where she is missing, Don Mateo stares at an empty chair, a concrete object that signifies her absence and intensifies his desire. Given this literal emphasis on subject position, it is easy to spot the substitutions, not only between the two actresses playing Conchita, but also between other objects of desire and contempt, which similarly go unnoticed by characters in the story. For example, Don Mateo's misogynistic butler claims a woman can easily be replaced by a sack of shit; and a Gypsy woman uses a pig in a blanket instead of a baby to help her beg for money, visual substitutions that demonstrate a comically perverse form of fetishism.

Spatialization permeates every aspect of the narrative. Their sadomasochistic romance is played out in a succession of theatrical rooms associated with humiliation: the shabby Parisian room that she shares with her mother, where he tries to buy her and from which he has them evicted as illegal aliens; the room in the suburbs that he prepares for her deflowering, where she evades him with her chastity belt and hides her young lover; the secret room upstairs in the Spanish flamenco night club where she dances in the nude for Japanese tourists; the spacious room in the house that he buys for her in Sevilla, where she makes love to her young lover while he watches through the front gate; and finally the harem-like room in which they have their intense argument where he draws blood and makes her piss in fear. All of these confining rooms are associated with humiliation – his or hers, sometimes both, usually his.

The most important spacializing of the narrative is the rivalry between foreground and background – between the erotic story evoked in the film's title, and the recurring acts of political terrorism that culminate in the final explosion. This rivalry for control over narrative space makes us explore the relationship between

sex and politics – between the battle of the sexes and class warfare, between the lover in the new room and the mad dog shot dead in the street. In *Anti-Oedipus* (1983), Deleuze and Guattari insist on exploring these relations, as Buñuel had been doing throughout his entire body of work. This structure also spacializes generic conflict and hybridity – with melodrama in the foreground and political satire in the background, each enriching and redefining the other, like desire and contempt. Usually performed in the streets or on the road, the political terrorism draws us out of our bourgeois rooms (whether cramped or spacious) where we frequently pretend we are unable or unwilling to change.

Like Roland Barthes's pivotal move from structuralism to post-structuralism in *S/Z* (1970), at the end of Buñuel's career – in the explosive climax of *Cet obscur objet du désir* – he confronts us with a series of conceptual binaries whose oppositions are literally detonated like bombs and whose fusions are revealed as the driving force of his fiction. For Barthes, after having carefully delineated an intricate series of structuralist binaries, it was a matter of demonstrating that denotation is the last of the connotations, that any readerly text can be transformed through a writerly reading, and that the meanings of all texts reside in the interplay between their sequential and agglomerative spaces. For Buñuel it was a matter of literally exploding those forked paths and recurring oppositions between France and Spain, foreground and background, sex and death, desire and contempt, masochism and sadism, metaphor and metonymy, melodrama and satire, oneiric theatre and picaresque fiction – all neatly compressed within the room and the road. Like Buñuel's last two films, this essay has sought to demonstrate how his rigorous conceptual ideas were translated into concrete narrative tactics – ideas that resonate with his entire body of works but whose implementation appeared increasingly simple – like the recurring interplay between the room and the road.

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Part Six

Discretion and Desire

22

On a Road to Nowhere

Parodic Movement as Time-Image in *La Voie lactée* and *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie*

Sheldon Penn

There has been little critical exploration of Deleuze's work on cinema in relation to the films of Luis Buñuel.[1] Tom Conley's essay on *Viridiana* (2008: 43–60) and Paul Sandro's discussion of naturalism with reference to a number of films (2003: 32–46) are two exceptions. Although Sandro briefly touches upon the time-image in his conclusion, both studies are primarily elaborations on Deleuze's concept of the "impulse-image" (a sub-category of the movement-image) that the philosopher connects to Buñuel in *Cinema 1* (2005a).[2] I would argue that there are two specific reasons behind the scant critical interest. First, the reader of *Cinema 1* might be forgiven for concluding that Deleuze had supplied the last word on Buñuel. Despite his commitment to nomadic thought that opens up possibilities for new readings, Deleuze as empiricist and taxonomist (albeit transcendental and nomadic) tends toward hard categorization in the cinema books (particularly in *Cinema 1*), which, for some, closes off avenues of participation: Buñuel, along with Stroheim and Ray, are the great "naturalists" of the movement-image; debate over. Second, the not entirely convincing hard periodization of the cinema books with their epochal shift from movement-image to time-image tends to relegate Buñuel to the past as a director of the old guard. Although Deleuze makes it clear that the cinema of the time-image is not to be viewed as qualitatively superior to that of the movement-image, the sociocultural (and, no doubt, academic) impulse to favor the new has inevitably led to a greater focus on the time-image. If this latter effect has been one reason for the scant consideration of Deleuze's ideas, there has also been a blind eye turned toward the philosopher's own qualification that Buñuel's late films

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marked a potential shift away from the indirect representation of time as eternal return toward a direct and "open" time-image (2005a: 137; 2005b: 99–100).

My intention is not to prove or disprove the philosopher's hypothesis by surveying the suggested conceptual shift from the early to the late cinema. Instead, taking the lead from Deleuze's conceptualizations of the image, this chapter will look at two of Buñuel's later films specifically to examine the ways in which the director's use of movement affects realizations of the time-image. Citing his famously errant career, Peter Evans and Isabel Santaolalla have called Buñuel "the great *flâneur* of world cinema" (2004: 4) and, in the introduction to her edited volume on *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* (The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie, 1972), Marsha Kinder has also noted how *flânerie* has been an important component of what she terms Buñuel's "nomadic discourse" (1999b: 1–27). Whilst much critical attention has been given to the centrality of voyeurism and a good deal to the restlessness that characterizes many of Buñuel's films as well as the director's life, the significance of *flânerie* has not been looked at critically in depth. In passing, Kinder refers to Modot's character, as he is dragooned through the streets of Paris, as "a reluctant *flâneur*" (1999b: 7). The qualification here strikes me as significant. If Buñuel is that "great *flâneur*" and, if the late films such as *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* and *Cet obscur objet du désir* (That Obscure Object of Desire, 1977) are a network of the travelings of so many *flâneurs* and *flâneuses*, they cannot be defined thus without careful scrutiny and contextualization.[3] Movement can never be connected to easy consumption in Buñuel's films and neither should his famously anecdotal characterization of the wanderer and barfly be read as shorthand for the bourgeoisie of his late films. *Flânerie*, along with the motor movement that accommodates it, is already reflected back within the suspicion of the gaze. The spectator of Buñuel's late cinema is prevented from adopting the characters as the surrogate eyes of the cinematic *flâneur* because the exaggerated mobility and self-assurance of these consummate consumers gives the lie to their behavior. It is this thoroughly parodic treatment of the forms and trajectories of movement in the late films that will be the primary concern of this study. As an aspect of Buñuel's treatment of movement, *flânerie* will be of particular value for a discussion of the time-image in these films because of the ways in which it gathers together movement, scopic perception, and its associated emotions and desires. If, as critics such as Anne Friedberg have argued, cinema is inseparable from the history of *flânerie* (1993: 90–94), Buñuel's films surely have a critical role in the development of that relationship.

Deleuze's fundamental distinction between the cinemas of the movement-image and time-image is that the former represents time indirectly whilst the latter actuates it directly. This difference hinges upon an appropriation of Bergson's philosophy of duration that argues that the classical conceptualization of time is based on an erroneous co-identification with space. It is this misrecognition that renders time quantifiable, but when we measure time as a divisible phenomenon we are effectively counting space. Essential to the sensory-motor rationalization of concrete reality, this conceptualization nevertheless remains a falsehood that, for Bergson, is responsible for the intractable schism between the extreme poles of

idealist and realist philosophies (1991: 25). That polarization can be resolved, he argues, once the true nature of time is understood and its relationship with space duly reconfigured. The result is Bergson's "pure" *durée*: time characterized as absolute, immaterial movement which, as *durée*, enters into a dynamic relationship with matter (extensive actuality) and memory (intensive virtuality).[4] In cinema, Deleuze sees the history of an art form that can be identified with the transition between these two understandings of time. At first, cinema makes use of the mobilized image in ways that reproduce a rational schema of time where time remains subordinate to movement. In this cinema of the movement-image, time is metaphorized via montage as spatial quantity and its image finds its place as part of a whole, a rational edifice encompassing film and the surrounding world. In modern, postwar cinema, Deleuze argues that the sensory-motor connection becomes severed and the time-image assumes dominance. Time is no longer represented as a constituent element of a finite matrix of intelligibility, rather it is activated as a realization of *durée*. Meaning, within the aegis of the movement-image, is produced only when movement itself is discounted. In the cinema of the time-image, meaning is to be found in the actualization of the Bergsonian understanding of time as movement. Whereas montage within the movement-image serves to bind a film's visual and sound images together to form a unified whole, the cinema of the time-image is characterized by a fragmentation brought about by the indiscernible quality of virtual time. The images of the movement-image connect in sequence as parts of a whole whilst those of the time-image relate to each other in their disconnection in a Bergsonian "open" system characterized by an inside–outside modality.

Albeit brief, the above summary will immediately give a sense of the style of cinema that predominates within Deleuze's definitions of the time-image. Despite some notable exceptions (popular film comedy, in particular), Deleuze's vast corpus of works of the time-image are drawn, in the main, from the European avant-garde, although not, it ought to be stressed, from abstract non-narrative cinema. As would be expected, given the emphasis on fragmentation of classical filmic continuity, directors such as Godard, Pasolini, and Tarkovsky are prominent "authors" of the time image.[5] It will be immediately apparent that Buñuel's approach sets him apart from, if not entirely at odds with, these figures. The director has often voiced his lack of interest in the poetic avant-garde and, from early years, openly expressed his love of popular American film and culture.[6] As playful, subversive, and consistently startling as Buñuel's films are, melodrama, popular comedy, and storytelling persist throughout his career. In considering the relevance of Deleuze's time-image to his films, this particular Buñuelian straddling of popular and art-house cinema must be taken into account. If, as Deleuze argues, Buñuel's late films open up time-images, it seems not entirely convincing to argue that this is the result of a sea change in directorial approach. There are compelling reasons to refer to *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* as a postmodern satire but, although its approach to narrative, for example, is extreme, it is not without precedent (in this it strikingly recalls *L'Âge d'or* [The Golden Age, 1930]). The uniqueness of Buñuel's cinema owes much to a consistent

worldview that balances popular dramatic tropes against subversive devices without, at its most successful, prejudicing one above the other. Because of this, I want to argue here that Buñuel's time-images are produced not necessarily from an outright abandonment of the movement-image but via a dialogue with it, often resulting in a form of parody. In one sense then, I am perhaps reading Deleuze against the grain by suggesting a "soft," transitional time-image and a "type" of cinema that inhabits ground in the division between the movement-image and the time-image. In another, it seems that such an inquiry might chime with a perspective of the *Cinema* volumes that can be easily overlooked. Cinema is, in the most basic terms, a movement-image. The time-image springs from the mobile photographic image as a new mode of seeing and thinking. At the risk of overstating a truism, there might be significant value in considering the works of a director who himself sets out to use the movement-image against the grain. A regrettable (although perhaps understandable given the hard periodization indicated) characteristic of the critical reception and development of Deleuze's work on cinema is the implication of a qualitative schism between the cinemas of the movement-image and time-image. An attempt to explore a meeting place between the movement-images and time-images could help to redress this tendency. In this chapter, therefore, I take an experimental approach to an analysis of the time-image in Buñuel's cinema.

The most apparent theme of *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* is frustration, underscored by the repeated failure of the film's plot motif to reach resolution. However, regarding the relationship between plot and narrative, Kinder makes an astute observation: "[p]artly because of the minimalism of the plot, our attention is drawn to the way the story is told, the narrative discourse, which is rich and complex" (1999b: 12). The frequent critical examination of frustration in the film is important and will be considered below, but a focus on frustration alone leads us to ignore the equally important presence of a narrative excess. Disruption in the film does not merely thwart storytelling; it necessitates an obsessive reiteration of narrative. As Kinder points out above, *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* sacrifices plot – the contents of a narrative – for emphasis on the act of narration. *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* also, albeit in a less extreme way, exhibits Buñuel's later preoccupation with micro-narratives evidenced most clearly in *La Voie lactée* (The Milky Way, 1969) and *Le Fantôme de la liberté* (The Phantom of Liberty, 1974). Ian Christie notes that "[w]ith *Simón del desierto* and *Belle de jour*, a new pattern began to emerge, marked by rupture and, technically speaking, multiple diegesis" (2004: 137). In much of Buñuel's late cinema, narratives proliferate and the process of film diegesis is brought to the fore. Kinder emphasizes this self-conscious display of diegesis, reminding us of the very clear filmic narrative device presented at the beginning of *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* and repeated on numerous occasions throughout: namely "a vehicle (in this scene, the chauffeur-driven luxury car) that literally drives the plot from one episode to another" (1999b: 12). Diegetic progression here, as elsewhere in the late films, whether on foot, as in *La Voie lactée*, or by Mathieu's train journey in *Cet obscur objet du désir*, is propelled materially

by a traveling apparatus; and this physical motor as a means of journeying is, simultaneously, an evident and well-worn metaphor for story.

The relationship between physical movement and diegesis in the later films is laid bare with such exaggeration that the viewer cannot fail to read it as a primary thematic concern. The effect of this hyperbole, in conjunction with the audience's knowledge of the metaphoric connections between journey and diegesis with their inevitable connotations of development, discovery, and resolution, is also comedic. It is here, of course, that the importance of narrative disruption makes itself felt. Although easily overstated, it is a commonly expressed opinion that the critical tone of Buñuel's films shifted over time from attack to parody, and nowhere is the change more clearly expressed than in *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* (Evans, 1995: 14). The parodic humor is not merely at the expense of the ritualistic behavior of the bourgeoisie; it is also clearly aimed at the process, technique, and aims of cinematic diegesis. Movement, in all of its mechanical and figurative manifestations, is the film's driver but being obviously legible as such, the viewer is compelled to treat it with suspicion. Like Fernando Rey's ambassador, the viewer is repeatedly taken for a ride but, unlike the ambassador, the audience knows what is going on.

The triggering of self-reflexivity, particularly powerful in *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie*, is a familiar tendency of Buñuel's late cinema and one which provides a direct link with a distinction Deleuze draws between the movement-image and the time-image. Despite the reference made above to Buñuel's preference for narrative film over the avant-garde, it becomes apparent that in the late cinema a more analytical than sensory response is required of the audience. This is not to say that the films provoke no emotion; rather the viewing experience is less automatic or visceral and is derived from a conscious process of reading. For Deleuze, this transition of the mode of viewing film is a characteristic of the shift to the time-image and is connected to the way in which he formulates the cinematic sign. Semiotic theory, with its basis in Saussurian structuralism, has made the idea and practice of reading film familiar. Deleuze, however, develops his sign system from Charles Sanders Peirce, who "conceive[d] signs on the basis of images and their combinations, not as a function of determinants that were already linguistic" (2005b: 29). The distinction Deleuze underlines is essential because it enables him to ground the exposition of film images within Bergsonian principles: "[t]he movement-image is matter [*matière*] itself, as Bergson showed. It is a matter that is not linguistically formed, although it is semiotically, and constitutes the first dimension of semiotics (2005b: 32). Deleuze devotes the bulk of *Cinema 1* to his elaborate taxonomy of the "signaletic material" (2005b: 32) of the movement-image, taking his basis as Peirce's categories of Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness, and developing these (with some liberty) in conjunction with Bergson's three fundamental forms of the movement-image: the perception-image, the affection-image, and the action-image, which he then breaks down and augments with further categories such as the relation-image.[7]

The material images of the movement-image function semiotically in a way that conforms to the sensory-motor mechanism. In this way, Deleuze defines the viewing process of the movement-image as a tracking of signs but because this functions in the form of a mechanical nerve response, he insists that, in his terms, it should not be understood as reading, an activity that he reserves for the new analytical reaction required by the estrangement brought about by the time-image. This distinction does not mean that the linguistic sign takes over in the cinema of the time-image, rather that the disruption of the "continuous presentation of action within a single time and space" (Bogue, 2003: 108) calls for a different viewing response in the face of a radical discontinuity. The various signs of the movement-image, it may be argued, are therefore intuited rather than read by the cinematic spectator. Deleuze's reasoning is again underpinned by Bergson and the discussion of movement in *Creative Evolution*. Movement, within the compass of the cinema of the movement-image, is intelligible, in Bergsonian terms, as a segment of an "isolated system" such as the example he gives of the glass of sugared water (Bergson, 1998: 9–10). The time experienced waiting for the sugar to dissolve is the concrete perception of the viewer and results from the abstraction of the isolated elements of the process (water, sugar, glass, viewer) which are, in essence, spatial and not temporal. The sum of these parts is not the Whole even though, as Deleuze tells us, they are "mobile sections" (2005a: 12) of duration and, as such, according to Bergson, demonstrate a tendency of matter that is everywhere observable in "*isolable* systems" (1998: 10, emphasis in original). The Whole, on the other hand, is open and exists as duration, or the quality of Relation that dictates perpetual change:

> The whole, creates itself, and constantly creates itself in another dimension without parts – like that which carries along the set of one quantitative state to another, like the pure ceaseless becoming which passes through these states. It is in this sense that it is spiritual or mental. (Deleuze, 2005a: 11)

The quantitative existence of the mobile section is the translation between objects but the qualitative reality of the Whole is a transformational vibration (Deleuze, 2005a: 9; Bergson, 1998: 32). This vibration, or temporal movement, is the duration of the universe that exists independently of matter and consciousness.

In the classic cinema dominated by the movement-image, time is represented indirectly as the experience of spatial movement made systematically intelligible via the organizational principles of montage. Movement, and with it the indirect representation of time, "flows from montage," but this is a movement which must be "normal":

> movement can only subordinate time, and make it into a number that indirectly measures it, if it fulfils conditions of normality. What we mean by normality is the existence of centers: centers of the revolution of movement itself, of equilibrium of forces, of gravity of moving forces, and of observation of a viewer able to recognize or perceive the moving body, and to assign movement. (Deleuze, 2005b: 34–35)

In this context, movement is perceived in line with a set of physical laws that correspond to the evidence of concrete experience and time is represented correspondingly as an image of duration mediated by the mobile sections of the print. For Deleuze, it is the cinema of the action-image that demonstrates the epitome of movement as a vehicle for realist narrative most thoroughly harnessing this "normal movement" as an indirect representation of time. Within the realist narratives of the action-image, movement and the time dictated by it are rationally systematic and take part in a relationship of fluid correspondence and intelligibility between the world of the film and the world at large. The movement-images that reproduce this are perceived as a sensory-motor confirmation of the experience of time and space.

In the late cinema, Buñuel puts film narrative under the microscope to strip it bare as a function of spatial movement. In reprising an excess of narrative (and narratives) the films also place narrative in crisis or, to put it differently, narrative at its limit, with its constituent parts exposed, suffers the unraveling of its system and intelligibility. The parody of narrative in *La Voie lactée*, *Le Fantôme de la liberté*, and, above all, in *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* explores this fault line in a way that can be read as an irruption of the time-image amidst the remnants of the movement-image. Although Deleuze defines movement in modern cinema as "aberrant" rather than "normal," citing Jean Epstein, he argues that the movement-image was always potentially aberrant despite the predominance of its usage to represent continuity (2005b: 35). As this chapter will now demonstrate with close analyses of *La Voie lactée* and *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie*, Buñuel manipulates this ambiguity in order to produce aberrant movement from a deliberately overdetermined normality.

La Voie lactée reprises an array of Christian heresies episodically within the loose framework of the St James pilgrimage, focalized through the journey of two vagabond pilgrims. It has no single, central narrative yet, as Christie points out, in adopting the pilgrimage, Buñuel connects to a rich European literary tradition which, particularly from the director's Spanish perspective, recalls many of the central tropes of the picaresque (2004: 137). As the archetypal narrative of peripatetic development, the picaresque complements what the director has termed his late cinema of "discontinuous continuity" (de la Colina and Pérez Turrent, 1992: 193). But whilst *La Voie lactée* retains elements of the picaresque, such as a wandering episodic structure and a barbed social criticism, it abandons the unifying point of view of a protagonist's developing psychology. In line with the picaresque, *La Voie lactée* comprises micro-narratives tied together by travel from one site to another, but, despite the central motif of the pilgrimage, Buñuel neither allows the narratives causality nor affords the spectator a clear revelation.

The beginning of the film clearly sets up contradictory tropes of movement as, on the one hand, purposeful journey and, on the other, restless and decentered traveling. Before the titles, a voice-over gives a commentary on the history of the St James pilgrimage accompanied by a rustic medieval-style map across which the camera pans to follow the route from France to Spain. The "arrival" at Santiago de Compostela is marked by a rapid zoom and close-up of an illustration of the



Figure 22.1 *La Voie lactée*: the *flâneur* cum sightseer of a monumental Santiago de Compostela. Fraia Film, Greenwich Film Productions, and Medusa Produzione.

cathedral, the map's representation of the city. A cut takes us to shots of Santiago, beginning with a panorama dominated by the cathedral and continuing with images of the streets and squares surrounding that building, several of which are traversed by an unknown middle-aged man smartly dressed in a suit and cape. The voice-over and images recall a cheap and dull publicity film designed for tourists. The implied ellipsis between the map that mimics rather than demonstrates antiquity takes us from the bland historical lecture to the contemporary city, but typical of the images sold to tourists, the shots of the city focus exclusively on ancient buildings and streets as if to erase the passage of time. The marginal presence of cars, contemporary signage, and the mysterious man betray evidence of the modernity that would threaten an authentic tourist experience.

In this way, *La Voie lactée* opens with a parodic rehearsal of the journey as a figure for narrative with a montage of sound and visual tracks that signpost the viewer in a self-consciously clumsy way. This effect is redoubled by the referencing of the modern-day pilgrim, the tourist, a sightseer whose role it is to consume the image (Figure 22.1). The geographical and historical A to Z of the pilgrimage is fed to the viewer in little over a minute as a completed exercise in "normal" movement, but the normality is excessive and, for a viewer accustomed to Buñuel's previous "false" prologues such as that of *Los olvidados* (The Forgotten Ones, aka The Young and the Damned, 1950), it arouses suspicion. The caped figure that descends stairs and crosses squares is simultaneously an anonymous passer-by and a focal point, evoking Benjamin's *flâneur*: "Dialectic of flânerie: on one side, the

man who feels himself viewed by all and sundry as a true suspect and, on the other side, the man who is utterly undiscoverable, the hidden man" (1999: 420). Within this figure, Buñuel condenses and reinforces both the theme and motor physicality of movement and underlines the surveillance of movement inherent in the cinematic experience.

Whilst the prologue accentuates the link between narrative realism and "normal" movement, the scenes accompanying the titles that immediately follow establish a movement that is contradictory and "aberrant." The historical continuity of the "timeless" images of Santiago de Compostela's monuments are juxtaposed with fast-moving, noisy A-roads shot from various perspectives and angles so that a multitude of vehicles moves, alternately, toward, away from, and across the plane of the frame. An initial match cut moves from a shot of the straight Rúa das Hortas taken from the top of the hill just below the Cathedral Square to another from a bridge over a motorway directly above the right-hand carriageway on which a high volume of traffic is rushing away from the camera. The geometry of the first road is reproduced, making an unconscious connection between the ancient pilgrim's route and the contemporary highway, but the nature of the movement implied in each scene could not be more distinct and the continuity suggested by the match cut is disrupted. Reminding us that the route was named after the Milky Way in the West because seventh-century pilgrims followed a star to St James's resting place, the prologue presents the history of a movement from periphery to center foreshadowing the film's ensuing dialogue between Christian orthodoxy and heresy. The movement of the traffic, on the other hand, is presented as devoid of purpose by a camera that shifts positions and angles. With equal emphasis on the roar of traffic noise that Buñuel frequently uses as an irritant in much of the late cinema, this modern movement dissects space to reproduce disconnected planes. The "gravity of moving bodies" (Deleuze, 2005b: 35) centering on Santiago de Compostela in the prologue allows a figuration of topological space. The movement of traffic, unpredictable and unceasing, dehistoricizes space, replacing the familiar tourist images of Santiago de Compostela with *l'espace quelconque* of the highway.[8]

Although *La Voie lactée* begins with the abrupt juxtaposition of what appear to be movement- and time-images, first of normal and then aberrant movement, it would be wrong to read the scenes as markers of epochal development. As Jean Claude Carrière points out, in writing the screenplay, he and Buñuel set out to "annihilate the space-time continuum" (Armogathe, 2005). *La Voie lactée* does not show a world defined by historical contrast (from the slow pace of the walker to the speed of the internal combustion engine), but instead places times and places alongside one another in a discontinuous confrontation. Buñuel's "trick" is that he most often achieves this paradoxically in the film via a continuity of movement that creates a phantom of narrative continuity, hence the multiple scenes of "time travel" such as that in which two Lutheran students interrupt the burning of a heretical bishop, run away, disguise themselves in modern clothes found by a river

and thereby "enter" the twentieth century.[9] As a result, a film that appears to center on the history of Catholic heresy is sharply anti-historical and, in this respect, sets out to deconstruct claims to ideological dogma of any form.[10] Read in this way, the prologue, illustrating historical continuity yoked to normal movement (what can be more "normal" than the celestial revolution of the stars?), is always placed under erasure by the director who delights in the inherent dissimulation of the movement-image.

Whether the beginning of *La Voie lactée* upholds Deleuze's view that, in his late cinema, "Buñuel's naturalist cosmology, based on the cycle and the succession of cycles, gives way to a plurality of simultaneous worlds" (2005b: 100) or whether we might be able to read this attitude in earlier cinema, it remains clear that Buñuel, even in the late films, plants the seed of the time-image in a form that continues to embrace – albeit mischievously – the classic mechanics associated with the movement-image. In *La Voie lactée*, Buñuel follows a pattern that he repeats in much of his late cinema: the disruption of narrative continuity coupled with an almost obsessive focus upon physical movement that would appear to mimic it. As Christie has pointed out, Godard's *Week-end* (Weekend, 1967) is a clear precursor to *La Voie lactée* (2004: 138–139).[11] From the restless and wayward traffic of the titles to the implicit critique of the tourist as consumer, *La Voie lactée* overlaps with *Week-end*. In the famous traffic jam sequence and elsewhere in the film, Godard also produces time-images through the depiction of physical travel that present the viewer not with a journey but with the stuttering collapse of the ideologies of the State and Capital. Whilst *Week-end* is humorous, its attack on society and narrative (which it does not do away with) is more uncompromising than that of *La Voie lactée*. In Buñuel's travelers, we are asked, rather than forced to see ourselves, something that becomes clear in the final scenes that openly question the nature of narrative as well as faith.

The end of *La Voie lactée* combines the ever-present ambulation of the pilgrimage with what Deleuze has called a "stratigraphic" or "tectonic" legibility of the image (2005b: 234). The route is apparently about to be completed by the disciples, Jesus and the two blind men healed moments before. Alongside a soundtrack of pealing church bells, a close-up on the legs and feet of the pilgrims sees them walk through long grass and over a narrow ditch. The newly sighted pair pause and, using their sticks, are shown feeling their way over the obstacle before the shot pans quickly to grass overlaid by text explaining the authenticity of the film's theological sources. The informative sobriety of the written word coupled with the culmination of the pilgrimage seem to offer documentary rigor and a signal of narrative closure, but these are undercut by the questioning of the miracle cure and the line of the ditch diagonally bisecting the image that hinders the straight line to the goal.

The ditch is only the last of several lineal incisions that dissect the frame in *La Voie lactée*, such as the train tracks first emphasized in close-up and then crossed by the beggars at Tours station and the highways with their aberrant traffic discussed above. This slicing of the terrain in conjunction with the theme of ambiguous

blindness inevitably link the final scenes to the beginning of *Un chien andalou* (An Andalusian Dog, 1929) and to the correlating sensory experience of the spectator's visual perception. Contrary to Buñuel's first film, vision here is not assaulted; rather the nature of its perception (or lack of perception) is brought into question. The question to the viewer is not "Do you realise you are watching this?" but "How are you watching this?" What we see (and hear) at the end of the film seem to be drawing us to a conclusion that parallels the arrival at Santiago de Compostela but, in truth, it tells us nothing of the sort. The film track, the soundtrack, and the text are, in Deleuzian terms, components rather than complements of the image comprising an open and ambiguous Whole. Normal, continuous movement through normal, contiguous space (the journey to Santiago) becomes aberrant movement dictating spaces that coexist and are capable of being linked and relinked in the process of cutting (Deleuze, 2005b: 235). The ditch, the highways, and the rails serve as visual reminders of the film's "archaeological" approach sifting through the "deserted layers of our time which bury our own phantoms" (2005b: 234). The textual commentary at the end of the film therefore functions not as historical footnote, but as an indicator of the provisionality of all past, present, and future ideologies that are piled up in the infinite layers of *La Voie lactée*'s tectonic landscape.

The deconstruction of the blindness and sight binary made concrete in the "cured" pilgrims ("Son of David, show me the colors white and black"), threatens the organic logic of the sensory-motor link required to "see" the movement-image and replaces it with the time-image as a process of reading. With reference to Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet's *Moses and Aron*, Deleuze discusses "the ambiguous landscapes" that reveal the image and its reverse simultaneously in which

> there is produced a whole "coalescence" of the perceived with the remembered, the imagined, the known. Not in the sense that it used to be said: to perceive *is* to know, is to imagine, is to recall, but in the sense that reading is a function of the eye, a perception of perception, a perception which does not grasp perception without also grasping its reverse, imagination, memory, or knowledge. In short, what we call reading of the visual image is the stratigraphic condition, the reversal of the image, the corresponding act of perception which constantly converts the empty into full, right side into its reverse. To read is to relink instead of link; it is to turn, and turn round, instead of to follow on the right side: a new Analytic of the image. (2005b: 235, emphasis in original)

When the newly sighted pilgrim declares, "Lord, a bird, I recognised it by the sound of its wings," despite the director's refutation, there is doubt raised about the genuine success of the miracle.[12] What Buñuel captures with the remarkable ambiguity of this doubt is a moment of profound faith in the openness of the image: a blind vision that reads both sides of the line (ditch, highway, track) achieving the "coalescence of the perceived with the remembered, the imagined, the known." The cured pilgrims are neither blind nor sighted but are just as they appear to be, simultaneously blind and sighted (Figure 22.2). Taking a lead from



Figure 22.2 *La Voie lactée*: The "blind sighted" pilgrims cross the ditch; one of several lineal incisions that disturb the straight-line progress of the pilgrimage. Fraia Film, Greenwich Film Productions, and Medusa Produzione.

the pilgrims, the viewer must read and reread *La Voie lactée* against the grain of the pilgrimage. Although the film begins and ends in Santiago de Compostela and plots a route from periphery to center, it is always elsewhere and in another time. Rather than a signpost for normal, continuous, and teleological movement, the celestial Milky Way becomes a cipher for the open and unpredictable movement of the universe that Deleuze attaches to the time-image.

A seemingly far more banal pilgrimage shapes the restless wanderings of *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* where the phantom of narrative continuity is yet more pronounced. In *La Voie lactée*, although we witness physical traveling, movement is primarily implied by the figure of the journey to Santiago. Movement in *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* is imbedded in the physical momentum of the group as they shift from one locus to the next in search of their goal. That this goal should be a meal rather than a shrine sets up the film immediately as a parody of a pilgrimage. If *La Voie lactée* appears to be *the* journey par excellence, *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* is movement for the purpose of expending energy. From the outset, the purpose is a substitute for other frustrated or hidden desires and, for this reason, as an act of displacement the movement is pathologically overdetermined. In *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie*, movement through space and the topological structure of *mise en scène* are accentuated and, perhaps more than in any other of Buñuel's films, the spectator is self-consciously implicated in the process. Deleuze's definition that normal movement depends upon the "observation of a viewer able to recognize or perceive the moving body, and to assign movement"

(2005b: 35) is acutely relevant to *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie*. It should be emphasized that the viewer is made uncomfortably aware that this is taking place and that he or she is being swept along by the movement of the image.

A contrast between the opening credits of *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* and those of *La Voie lactée* is revealing. Moving vehicles and roads again feature but the treatment of the subjects is distinct. *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* presents a point-of-view shot from inside a moving vehicle at night looking through the windscreen with the road ahead illuminated by headlights. The weak lighting and the rainy conditions make the view indistinct and the accompanying soundtrack of engine and traffic sounds offers only immediate contextual assistance. On several occasions, we are momentarily plunged into darkness before being reoriented by the lights picking out objects ahead, one of these being the black and white chevrons of a sign indicating a bend in the road. With these the first images, the viewer has no character with which to associate the point of view and so the implied identification of the audience as driver or passenger is reinforced. The implication is clear: the camera is taking us on a mysterious and suspenseful journey toward some unknown destination. Although such an exaggerated and extended point-of-view shot will not be repeated in the film, this sequence prepares us for subsequent abundance of movement tied self-consciously to the promise of revelation. When a cut takes us to a shot of the car, we first see the bourgeois group who will assume our gaze for us and, as if to underline this, once inside the Sénéchal's house, Bulle Ogier's Florence will walk into the foreground and scan the edges of the frame.

The revelation will not be forthcoming because the normality of the movement in *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie*, just as that of *La Voie lactée*, is an illusion. However, in its excess of moving bodies, *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* parades a display of realism that squares with Deleuze's second type of the action-image, the "small form," characterized by the rhythm ASA' or action-situation-action. Opposed to the SAS' film that foregrounds a global milieu initiating developmental actions, the ASA' pattern springs forth situations from actions, "modes of behaviour," or habitual manners of dress (2005a: 164–181; 167).[13] *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* would seem to be a study of the ASA' form that is all action, behavior, and habit from which the viewer is compelled to deduce a situation. The wit of the film lies in the deconstruction of the rhythm of the "small form," producing "situations" that are no more than actions masquerading as milieus. Deleuze argues that the organization of space in the "small form" is attributable to a sign that he terms "the vector"; a line that produces a *"skeleton-space"* of connecting nodal places rather than one, overarching "ambient space" (2005a: 172–173). On the surface, *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* would appear to conform to this structure to the letter, the bourgeois company defined not by a milieu, instead revealing it repeatedly through their travelings from location to location. But the vector is a sign of broadly realist cinema and rather than unfolding a skeleton, *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* reveals a series of relocating strata that share an uncertain topological relationship.

Comparing *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* to *El ángel exterminador* (The Exterminating Angel, 1962), Deleuze argues that the former is an example of the "deepening of the problem of time," showing "less a cycle of interrupted meals than different versions of the same meal in irreducible modes and worlds" (2005b: 99). To qualify this, it could be argued that the viewer senses an initial, cyclical repetition that is replaced by spatial and temporal simultaneity. The apparently realist series of appointments to dine and the associated comings and goings of the group are steadily stripped of the veneer of verisimilitude through the course of the film and, with hindsight, we are left to question the apparent validity of the preceding scenarios. The series of dreams that takes us into topologically incoherent spaces within spaces ends with Fernando Rey's character enjoying a midnight snack, the viewer wondering whether the other attempted meals are nothing more than digestive repetitions of the cold meat he's devouring. The illusion of the skeletal network of the "small form" is eroded by editing that increasingly underlines the legibility of the film in the Deleuzian, archeological sense, and the places that at first may seem to mesh into a coherent bourgeois milieu suffer a weakening of the bonds or vectors that join them. Nowhere is this clearer than the cut to the first dream within a dream initiated by the Colonel's invitation to dinner. With a typically economic elliptical device, the Colonel's words "we live at 17 rue du parc" connect the scenes via a sound bridge transporting the group from one time and place to another in a blinking of an eye. A classically realist montage technique is used self-consciously in order to reveal the illusion of verisimilitude, implying a vector linking the Sénéchal's house to the Colonel's but erasing it in the series of dreams that follow. Once the normal movement indicated by the elliptical device is called into question, the montage is exploded into its constituent parts. In the "small form" action-image, the spoken and written "17 rue de parc" would endorse each other, thereby confirming a realist, spatial, and narratival continuity. Here, with a time-image initiating aberrant movement, we become aware of the difference and the separation between the visual and sound images. Deleuze's observation that Buñuel is presenting us with "the same meal in irreducible modes and worlds" (2005b: 99) is supported powerfully by the way in which the viewer is prevented from subconsciously linking the two meals in succession but is made to relink them by the fissure brought about by the cut. That the cut mimics the classical editing of the action-image serves to illustrate the standpoint of parodic humor from which the time-image springs.

The Colonel's invitation appears to link the two meals and two events together successively as products of his and the group's will and desire, but once the normality of movement between the two events is broken so too is the coherence of the characters' intentionality. It is on this plane that Buñuel's film explores the interconnecting mechanisms of bourgeois desiring, ritual, and rationality and where he intersects most closely with the figure of the *flâneur*. Where *La Voie lactée* has an overtly intellectual subject matter, *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie*, a play on the comedy of manners, has a more human face, not least because it openly

invites the viewer to participate in the wandering micro-narratives. However, in a film that consistently reads itself against the grain, this humanity is unsurprisingly ambiguous. The viewer's ability to identify with the characters is limited by their failure to conform to the rounded, psychological entities required for realist narrative continuity.

Paul Sandro has argued that "an erosion of verisimilitude" operates on two levels in *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie*. First, via "the characters' *own* reading of events within their fictional universe if those events are insufficiently or inversely motivated from their perspective," and second, where the audience is led to doubt "the overall verisimilitude of the narrative text, which involves all the codes implicated in the text, not just those brought into play from the perspective of the characters" (1987: 81–82). For Sandro, drawing on Barthes's "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives" (1977: 79–124), Mme Sénéchal's assertion that it is "incredible" that there should be nothing apart from water in the café "strengthens verisimilitude temporarily" because "Mme Sénéchal is not only a figure of action, an *actant* defined by her participation in a sphere of actions, but also a figure of being, a *character* defined by indices that mark her as a 'person'" (1987: 83, emphasis in original).

Although the distinction is subtle, I would argue that this reading misjudges the film's semantics of verisimilitude. The characters of *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* are always overridingly *actants* rather than "persons" and this status is revealed precisely in their unconvincing insistence on the integrity of being. A realist narrative continuity that would endorse verisimilitude of being at no stage pertains in *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* and Mme Sénéchal's vain and therefore humorous insistence of disbelief provides the proof. *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* parades a simulacrum of verisimilitude whilst consistently bringing it into question.

It is the characters' peculiar liminal status as *actants* unable to convince as "figure[s] of being" that allows them, as time-images of cinematic thought, to become identified with the audience rather than vice versa. This is also the essence of *flânerie* as it exists in Buñuel's late cinema. Discussing *El ángel exterminador* and *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie*, Sandro asserts that "[b]oth films satirize bourgeois consumption thematically (the consumers consumed, the consumers disgorged), but they also play on their own status of narrative consumption" (1987: 87). Bourgeois consumption, signaled most clearly in the motif of the meal, is also interrogated in the rendering transparent of the mechanisms and movement of diegesis. The bourgeois group of the *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* can patently be connected to the *flâneur* as middle-class city dwellers, scopically consuming their environment as they travel. But Sandro reminds us that as "consumers consumed," the group are far removed from the classic gaze of the *flâneur* of modernity encapsulated in early cinema. Writing of the *flâneuse* in Weimar cinema, Anke Gleber neatly sums up the modernist archetype: "By way of flanerie – a mode of movement that is as the same time a process of reflection and a manner of walking with an attendant presence of mind and a close attention to images – the flaneur

transcends modern alienation through an epistemological process of intensive perception" (1997: 67). Following closely the *flânerie* of Benjamin's dialectical image, Gleber's definition elucidates the extent to which Fernando Rey's ambassador and the others are parodies of the *flâneur*. Benjamin's notion of the *flâneur* allows for a subtle reading of scopic agency, mitigated as it is by the powerful alienation of the modern city. To this extent, one can read Benjamin's thesis of modernity in Buñuel's late cinema, particularly in the way in which consumer societies make a spectacle of overlaid times. But Buñuel's urban strollers, although descendants of the lineage, are quite distinct from that analytical figure. These are a group that perform the physical movements of *flânerie* but appear incapable of the accompanying dialectical synthesis.

This "dumb" *flânerie* of Buñuel's bourgeoisie directs, in turn, the experience of the spectator as cinematic *flâneur*. As distinct from the "figures of being," outlined by Sandro, the characters in *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* do not "use" their walking as a way to activate a mobile gaze and there is no evidence in their behavior of a "process of reflection." This is significant because, despite the overt reference to *flânerie*, Buñuel is deliberately undercutting the phenomena with which it has become associated in the cinema, namely the mobilization of the gaze of the spectator. Of this, Gleber states:

> The flaneur pursues what is akin to a cinematic gaze, enacting a modern perspective that at once performs the activities of the spectator (with his eyes), of the camera (with his mind as a medium of recording), and of the director (with his writing and reordering the collected images into a text of what he – or she – has seen). (1997: 84)

Buñuel had already lampooned the camera eye as *flâneur* when, in *L'Âge d'or*, he mocks musical compositions of the metropolis such as Walter Ruttman's *Berlin, die Sinfonie der Großstadt* (Berlin, Symphony of the City, 1927) with an inharmonious and scrappy montage of deliberately random city landscapes. The pseudo-*flâneurs* of *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* and other late films (Fernando Rey's Mathieu of *Cet obscur objet du désir* being a powerful example) can be seen as an extension of this early approach.

All of the attributes of the spectator-*flâneur* outlined by Gleber above can be directly associated with Deleuze's qualifications of the cinema of the movement-image that I have discussed here. The function of the *flâneur*, in this sense, relies upon the continuity of Deleuze's "normal" movement. Although the *flâneur* or *flâneuse* may be a wanderer and, in the Benjaminian sense, the product of their gaze dialectically reproduces modernity, their movement is rational and synthetic in its production of a spatiotemporal map. None of this, either from the perspective of the characters or the spectator, applies to *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie*, as the film's most overt reference to the *flâneur*, the much commented walking scenes, make clear.

The three brief scenes in which the group walk down a rural road unconnected to the other diegetic sites are a condensation of the film's scrutiny of physical

movement and the parody of movement as a figure for narrative continuity. Lifted from their usual habitat of the city, the characters' apparent *flânerie* is simultaneously emphasized and displaced. There is no purpose in these actions and, in particular, the only things that they appear to be doing – walking and looking – are emphasized precisely by their lack of logical, diegetic motivation: the mobilization of the gaze *is* the joke. A pun on the classic function of the movement-image, the walking scenes also satirize the idea of the *flâneur* as antenna and organizer of thought. Instead, Buñuel's pseudo-*flâneurs*, particularly in the walking scenes where the figures hover between characters and actors playing characters, are closer to what Deleuze has termed the "spiritual automaton" (2005b: 163–165).[14] Rather than agents of the mobile gaze and synthesizers of thought, they are functions of a universal, aberrant mobility conforming to Deleuze's conception of the time-image as a process of a cinematic mind that links and relinks within the aegis of the perpetual movement of time. The spectator, faced with the spatial and temporal discontinuities of *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie*, is refused the role of the *flâneur* of the movie theatre whose gaze ranges synthetically over time and space.

Read psychoanalytically as "figures of being" (Sandro, 1987: 83), it might be argued that the characters of *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* sublimate desire into ritual but this level of meaning is undermined in the film through the constant erosion of verisimilitude. The walking scenes in the film are emblematic of a treatment of movement that supplants continuity with irreducible simultaneity. Very often read as a metaphor for the bourgeoisie, they are, on the contrary, the reverse of metaphor, being nothing more than what we see. As instances of aberrant movement, although lacking the violent pace of the traffic that cuts the frame in *La Voie lactée*, they recall that striation of the image and the decentering of perspective on movement again achieved by the quick cross-cutting of shots from multiple angles. The road, another any-space-whatever, is more suggestive of a destination than the highways of *La Voie lactée*'s titles, but ultimately provides none. The last we see of the group is a long-distance shot as they walk from right to left, center frame along the road, flanked vertically by sky above and fields below. The image is taken out of focus so that the road and the group become one indivisible stratum of the backdrop of the end credits, in an effect that recalls Mark Rothko's block-color landscapes. Throughout this sequence, the only sounds are those of footsteps on tarmac, distant traffic, wind, and the cawing of crows, which provide a rational complement before the blurring of the frame and an eerie counterpoint after. The viewer, not unlike the blind sighted pilgrims of *La Voie lactée*, is uncertain whether he or she can "see" the group because somewhere they are "there" but, again, not unlike the microscopic detail of Rothko's blocks, in their atomization they have been made invisible to the human eye. And the viewer, in this way, becomes the pseudo-*flâneur* – not the synthesizer of the mobile gaze but a conduit for *durée* or the open Whole that is glimpsed in the time-image.

Buñuel's bourgeoisie in the walking scenes are functions of aberrant movement unrestricted by the closed universes of narrative continuity and psychological

verisimilitude. On this road, part belonging to the roles that define them in the rest of the film but part "removed" from the flimsy diegesis and as if they were becoming something else, the constraints of conventional desiring are loosened. When their projections merge with the landscape at the end of the film, they overtly become something other than "person[s]" or Sandro's "figures of being":

> Taking a walk is a haecceity; never again will Mrs. Dalloway say to herself, "I am this, I am that, he is this he is that." And "She felt very young; at the same time unspeakably aged. She sliced like a knife through everything; at the same time was outside, looking on. … She always had the feeling that it was very, very dangerous to live even one day." Haecceity, fog, glare. A haecceity has neither beginning nor end, origin nor destination; it is always in the middle. It is not made of points, only of lines. It is a rhizome.[15] (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004: 290)

Taking their example from "Virginia Woolf's walk through the crowd, among the taxis" (2004: 290), Deleuze and Guattari identify the "thingness" or haecceity of a singular becoming that is defined not by subjectivity but by a "collective assemblage" (2004: 292). As the group change from points on a vector to a line they become indistinguishable from a "plane of consistency" comprising only longitudinal movements and latitudinal affects (2004: 287). The end of the film is also "the middle" and the Whole and the only non-parodic movement of *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* is taking place as immanence within the final plane of consistency. That movement includes the image of the soundtrack still reproducing the trace of footsteps we can no longer see and emphasizing the illogical topology of the open Whole.

This haecceity intersects with the question of *flânerie* in Buñuel's late films, sharply recalling Benjamin: "Under the influence of spectacle, the rubberneck becomes an impersonal being. He is no longer a man – he is the public; he is the crowd" (1999: 429). Friedberg traces the development of "the mobilized and virtual gaze of spectatorship" (1993: 129) from modernity to postmodernity, arguing that cinema, combined with the spectacle of consumer society, has created subjects akin to the *flâneurs* of time tourism where "the past becomes a component of the present" (1993: 185). Commenting briefly on the cinema books, she points out that Deleuze's studies ought to chime with her own because he "draws upon Bergsonian theses of the past as virtual," but fail to do so because he addresses only the diegetic treatment of time and not the societal changes brought about by time as cinematic phenomenon (1993: 129). Friedberg is right to say that Deleuze pays little or no overt attention to this but she is too quick to dismiss what the time-image has to teach us about cinematic *flânerie*. As a philosopher rather than cultural theorist, Deleuze's cinema books are above all a study of the cinematic as a concept of thought in action. Reading *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* as a Deleuzian "doing" of that concept – concepts are only actions for Deleuze – we see a functioning of a mind as a new cybernetic model that is directly transferable to the spectator. The spectator as *flâneur* is a product of the time-images of *La Voie lactée* and *Le Charme discret de la*

bourgeoisie and not a locus of the remodeling of time. The virtual for Bergson and for Deleuze is not the postmodern shadow of a once real time, it is the past, on the one hand, as metaphysical memory and, on the other, as a plane of immanence. Buñuel's *flâneurs*, or as I have called them, pseudo-*flâneurs*, are models, not just for a form of spectatorship, but for a form of becoming within the subjectivity of time. That they and the real pseudo-*flâneurs* who watch them desire to be voyagers with a purpose corresponds to the logic of the closed world of the movement-image and is a potent source of Buñuel's ironic humor.

Notes

1 The works that most directly inform my reading of Buñuel's films in this chapter are Gilles Deleuze's *Cinema 1* (2005a) and *Cinema 2* (2005b). Deleuze's ideas have had a considerable impact on film studies since their publication in the 1980s, although this has been limited in the Anglo-American academe by an approach that has focused predominantly on the social and industrial contexts of cinema. The cinema books should be read, not so much as a new theory of cinema – although they draw extensively on French film theorists – as a philosophy of a cinematic mind. Deleuze's use of cinema is therefore unique. His ideas are still being debated and redeployed by film studies scholars but also by philosophers and critical theorists. Deleuze's books are a useful prism through which to read Buñuel because they enable new readings of underexplored aspects of his films, such as their spatial and temporal qualities. In this way, Deleuze's categories of the movement- and time-image can open up meanings in Buñuel's cinema differing from the established themes of social criticism, psychoanalysis and Surrealism that have been dominant until relatively recently. The volumes edited by Peter Evans and Isabel Santaolalla (2004) and Marsha Kinder (1999b) (and, of course, the current volume) are valuable points of reference for the new foci that are repositioning the study of Buñuel's films.

Deleuze's books are challenging and repay rereading, but they also draw on a vast corpus of films and film theory that in themselves serve as a rich resource of further study. The philosopher's love of cinema is clear and his enthusiasm makes getting to grips with the difficult concepts easier than a reader might first imagine. Nevertheless, it undoubtedly helps to understand the intellectual contexts of Deleuze's books in order to properly grasp the ideas of the movement- and time-image. Here, the reader should look first to Henri Bergson and, in particular, his *Creative Evolution* and *Matter and Memory*. An internationally influential and popular philosopher in the first decades of the twentieth century, Bergson's works would have since been largely neglected had it not been for the attention paid to them by Deleuze. Bergson's central concept of *durée*, or pure duration, is a primary source of Deleuze's conceptualization of immanence and underpins his defining category of modern cinema, the time-image.

Two important anthologies, collecting translations of some of the key works of film theory to which Deleuze refers in his *Cinema* books, are those of Abel, R. (1988a; 1988b). Also important are Deleuze's own *Bergsonism* (1991) and Rodowick (1997).

Finally, two collections of essays on wide-ranging topics relating to Deleuze's *Cinema* books are Flaxman (2000) and Rodowick (2010).

2 For Deleuze's sustained treatment of Buñuel, see the chapter "From Affect to Action: The Impulse-Image" (2005a: 127–144).
3 "Network" is a term used by James Tobias in his study of the organization of power in the wandering narratives of *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie*, *Le Fantôme de la liberté*, and *Cet obscur objet du désir* (1999: 141–175). I will go on to consider this network differently in relation to Deleuze's formulations of the movement- and time-images.
4 My summation is too broad to provide a single, useful reference but this is the key thesis of *Matter and Memory*, the most important volume of Bergson's work for the development of Deleuze's ideas in *Cinema 2*.
5 "Author," rather than "director," is a term that Deleuze himself uses most frequently.
6 In relation to the former see, for example, his horror at a performance of Lorca's *Yerma* and, to the latter, his memories of the delight he felt in his first trip to the United States (Buñuel, 1994: 102, 128).
7 Ronald Bogue provides a usefully succinct commentary on Deleuze's adaptation of Pierce's semiology (2003: 65–68).
8 Deleuze makes use of this term (translated as "any-space-whatever") on numerous occasions in his work on film. See, for example, his summation of the transition "beyond the movement image" (2005b: 5). As a consequence of what may have been a typographical error in *Cinema 1*, there has been considerable debate as to whether Deleuze borrowed the term directly from the work of Marc Augé or from his student, the anthropologist, Pascal Auger. For a clarification of the controversy, see David Martin-Jones (2011: 249, n.45).
9 For Buñuel's discussion of this scene, see de la Colina and Pérez Turrent (1992: 194).
10 See the director's observations (1994: 245). It ought to be added that whilst deconstructing these dogmas, Buñuel finds joy in their ingenuity and imagination.
11 It seems likely that Buñuel's frequent use of traffic noise mentioned above, as well as the obliteration of dialogue in *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie*, are indebted to Godard.
12 For Buñuel's discussion of this, see de la Colina and Pérez Turrent (1992: 197–198).
13 Deleuze cites the costume drama as an example of ASA', in contrast to "the monumental and antiquarian conception" of the historical drama. I use the term "habitual manner of dress" above to reflect the translator's decision to supply the original French *habits* alongside the English "outfits" (2005a: 167).
14 Bulle Ogier, who plays Florence, is cited by Deleuze as one of a group of modern actors that "might be called professional non-actors, or, better, 'actor-mediums,' capable of seeing and showing rather than acting, and either remaining dumb or undertaking some never-ending conversation, rather than replying or following a dialogue …" (2005b: 19).
15 Víctor Fuentes has also made the connection between *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* and the rhizome: "We can see the labyrinth as the encompassing narrative figure of *The Discreet Charm* and its hybrid textuality: a labyrinth of the rhizomatic modality described by Deleuze and Guattari, without centre, periphery, or exit" (1999: 92).

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23

The Intertextual Presence of Lewis Carroll's Alice in *Belle de jour*

Arnaud Duprat de Montero

The final French films by Luis Buñuel, from *Belle de jour* (1967) to *Cet obscur objet du désir* (That Obscure Object of Desire, 1977) are somewhat different from the rest of this Spanish director's filmography, particularly on account of the numerous intertextual and architextual references that they contain.[1] Previous works from the Mexican period, adapted novels, scientific sources consulted and the literary and cinematographic reference held dear by the director are all summoned. Yet these films pick up the main characteristics of these references and respect them, only to combine them with the paradigmatic opposites of one or several elements which would have completed the association between Buñuel's text and the references in question. In this way, whilst *La Voie lactée* (The Milky Way, 1969) can be seen to evoke the picaresque, the erudite theological discussions or the adulthood of Pierre and Jean stimulates a certain feeling of strangeness. Furthermore, the evocation of burlesque cinema – Laurel and Hardy, the Marx Brothers, Buster Keaton, and so on – in *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* (The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie, 1972), where the bourgeois characters challenge the typical innocence of this type of hero, displaying instead a deep immorality, also disturbs the viewer. Finally, by removing a reference from its original context, the works also twist its meaning whilst giving the impression that the reference is being repeated in accordance with the original. Thus the quotes from Sade, particularly in *La Voie lactée*, which in the original text appeared as unquestionable proof of the author's thoughts, are here offered up to the viewer in a cloud of doubt and interrogation. This is achieved due to the different conditions under which they are pronounced. This large number of references, often codified and intended to weave a coherent cinematic web – which in this case gives rise only to disorder and confusion – plays a highly important role here. In appearing to be the fruit of a dual creative process, the works arouse in the viewer uneasiness similar to that

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provoked by fantasy works. Though it may appear that such intertextual marks are rare in *Belle de Jour*,[2] the presence of mirrors and the fantasizing in the story of Séverine nevertheless evoke *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking-Glass* (1872) by Lewis Carroll. These novels, which contain elements of the fantasy genre[3] despite critics categorizing them as "nonsense literature," present several links with Buñuel's universe. Having first defined these, it will subsequently be necessary to investigate the approach which produced the presence of the "*Alice* books" in *Belle de Jour*. Séverine, much like the English heroine, takes an initiatory step toward a voyage of self-discovery and this should provide some clues casting light on the enigma of the French bourgeoise. Nevertheless, insofar as a reference is only interesting in Buñuel's eyes if it is subverted, this particular subversion, based as it is on a literary work viewed as important by the Surrealists, could well refer to this artistic movement and make *Belle de Jour* vary between an homage and an appraisal of the latter's approach.

Let us start by a reminder that the "*Alice* books" had a decisive influence on the Surrealist movement, which appreciated the world created in them where the opposites established under our rational reference points are abandoned and where creativity and imagination find new liberty. The English author's approach is founded on the reader's reality but also, in the same way as Buñuel's, on literary references, particularly those aimed at a young audience. These intertextual quotes, such as moral poems or instructional novels, are plentiful in Carroll's work; they are deliberately made recognizable solely to twist their meaning all the more, thereby making them reach the opposite conclusion from the original.[4] The approach is thus subversive. Inversion is a dominant device in the *Alice* books, but the diegetical world creation goes beyond the basic absurd by presenting a heroine from our reality who experiences the turmoil and the strangeness therein. According to Ronald Reichertz, "Alice's experiences invariably combine the allure of the curious with the pain that results from the associated physical and social awkwardness to create an oxymoronic whole" (Reichertz, 1997: 47). We come thus to oxymora and the resulting distress, which are to be found in *Le Fantôme de la liberté* (The Phantom of Liberty, 1974), with the killer poet who is at once sentenced and free, the prefect who is unique and dual, his sister who is dead and alive, as well as the little Legendre girl who is reported as missing by her parents, her teacher … yet is still present.[5]

The term "nonsense literature" is ultimately fairly ill suited to the *Alice* books because whilst these books do challenge our rational logic, they only do so by setting another demonstrably indisputable logic against it; and let us not forget that Lewis Carroll was a mathematics professor at Oxford. Indeed, according to Roger Lancelyn Green, "It was his [Carroll's] training in formal logic – as Peter Alexander, himself a professional logician, points out – which enabled him to build 'a setting within which inconsistency would appear inevitable, and so convincing …'. The purely logical sequence of reasoning from an illogical premiss" (Carroll, 1982: XIX).

If literary references, scientific knowledge, and even morality can be manipulated and twisted away from their commonly accepted meaning, then language becomes a weapon. Much like Rafael – *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* – or Don Lope – *Tristana* (1970) – the egg Humpty Dumpty "brings language onto his own territory, making sure that the words mean what he wants them to mean … he who can manipulate words turns them into a rhetorical weapon" (Ballesteros, 1998: 264–265). Our world is therefore shaken to its most elementary foundations and thus Lewis Carroll anticipates the arrival of Surrealism. Moreover, it is this refusal and this calling into question of the established and imposed order which André Breton praises when he writes: "All of those feeling a sense of revolt will recognize in Lewis Carroll the prime master of playing truant" (cited in Carroll, 1994: 164). The English author's works provide a new liberty of thought, necessitating this challenge to what we consider to be logical and unquestionable. Thus Harvey Darton praises these novels for their:

> liberty of thought … no more dread about the moral value … The *Alices* are pure invention … There is simply magic, and even that is treated as just an extension of the natural … The essence of the story is the translation of the ordinary into the extraordinary in a plausible way – not as a conjuring trick … but as an almost logical extension of properties inherent in this or that person or animal. (Darton, 1966: 268–269)

Reality remains, therefore, as we have already seen, a reference for Carroll, and the strangeness which the stories arouse is connected to the link which the fantasy genre maintains with the reader's reality. In fantasy works, the narrator character, with whom we are supposed to identify, plunges us into a world which is familiar yet which rapidly disorientates us. This phenomenon, to which the worrying portrayals presented by some characters contribute, is based on a subversion of time and space as they are defined and observed rationally in more realistic literature. In fantasy tales (such as *The Monk* by Matthew Lewis, or *The Manuscript Found in Saragossa* by Jan Potocki), time can be suspended or suddenly accelerate. Its linearity and its regularity are abandoned and time periods are superimposed upon each other. This also applies to space, where several distant places can be united in one. On the subject of the *Alice* books, Jean-Jacques Mayoux more particularly points out that "what is reassuring in real life is the temporal and causal continuity of the phenomena involved [whereas in the *Alice* books] it is discontinuity, the suddenness of the visions with no transitional periods in between, presences which [the readers] were not prepared for" (cited in Carroll, 1994: 165).

It is therefore undoubtedly this discontinuity which provides the fantasy dimension of these novels despite the constant parodic humor.[6] And it is this same discontinuity which also characterizes Buñuel's final films, as much in terms of the psychology of the characters as in terms of the narrative, by rejecting any relationships of causality similar to those found in reality. Though the bourgeois

characters of *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* never become aware that they are the prisoners of a unique and repetitive situation, Monsieur Foucaud – *Le Fantôme de la liberté* – returns to his daughter the postcards which he found obscene a few minutes before, yet dismissed the maid for having allowed his daughter to accept them in the first place. This lack of coherence can also be seen when Monsieur Legendre sees his daughter again in the prefect's office. Whilst he was concerned during her absence, he seems by this moment to have forgotten it and does not manifest excessive joy. Furthermore, this character is involved in two plots; firstly, when he is told that he has cancer and of his imminent death; then, the disappearance of his daughter. The anxiety provoked by the first event is forgotten at the time of the second, which may in itself appear to make sense. But the problem is that the film itself appears devoid of the memory in which the characters are so lacking. As far as Monsieur Legendre is concerned, the film has "forgotten" that he has cancer – "in a fairly advanced state," according to the doctor he consulted – since the search for his daughter lasts for more than "fourteen months," at the end of which he is in no way affected by his illness.

However, as was stated above, it is thanks to *Belle de jour*, where the intertextual presence of the *Alice* books is visible, that the link between Lewis Carroll and Luis Buñuel becomes obvious. Alice and Séverine are two heroines who find themselves plunged into the opposite universe to their own, or more precisely an inverted universe. When she is feeling bored in the drawing-room, Alice stands in front of the mirror and explains to her cat: "there is the room you can see through the glass – that's just the same as our drawing-room, only the things go the other way … the books are something like our books, only the words go on the wrong way" (Carroll, 1982: 127). On the other side of the looking-glass, objects are the same only inverted and they have a hidden face – the one which remains invisible to Alice when she is facing the mirror – in the same way that the characters Séverine comes across in the milieu of prostitution directly echo those from her bourgeois life, being presented as their inverted reflections. The same applies to Pierre and Marcel. The veritable archetypes of the two extremes of the social scale, they are brought together by their unassuaged desire to possess Séverine. Mathilde and Charlotte, the heroine's work companions, resemble Renée who seems to share certain masochistic practices with them.[7] Furthermore, she appears to express her fascination with the world of brothels. Having revealed that a common acquaintance, Henriette, is a prostitute, Renée remarks, "But do you realize, Séverine? A woman like you or me …" In the company of these characters, the heroine maintains a certain distance. The motives behind Séverine's decision to become a prostitute differ from the purely economic ones of Mathilde and Charlotte, whilst Renée's more liberal morals create a barrier between her and the pure Séverine. "It's true, you're so far removed from all that," recognizes Renée when trying to make Séverine react to the news about Henriette. In this perfectly compartmentalized system, two characters alone establish a link between the two worlds without establishing a contradiction, and they are Madame Anaïs and Husson. Knowing as



Figure 23.1 *Belle de jour* 1. Robert and Raymond Hakim, Paris Film Productions and Five Film.

they do the codes of the two worlds frequented by Séverine, they appear as the people who allow the young woman to pass between the two worlds.[8] Moreover, if the flat she shares with Pierre reminds us of Séverine's bourgeois identity, Madame Anaïs's flat performs the same function with regard to Séverine's status as a prostitute. Like two sides of the same psyche, the latter retains a troubling resemblance to the first. Of course, Madame Anaïs's flat is far removed from the luxury of Séverine's, but the colors are reasonably similar and give the impression that the one is a proletarian version of the other. The hallway in the brothel also merits comparison with the one in the heroine's flat which leads from the bedroom to the front door. On either side of this door is to be found a table with a vase (Figure 23.1). In Madame Anaïs's flat, two small tables are separated by a window and a vase is placed on each of them. On the left, before reaching the doors of the bedrooms, we find a chest of drawers with a chair on either side (Figure 23.2). In Séverine's flat a chair is to be found on the left, next to the living-room door. And, most noticeably of all, in both cases, there is a curtain on the right.

If Buñuel's heroine displays a curiosity for houses, Alice also expresses her desire to visit the world beyond the mirror: "Oh! I do so wish I could see *that* bit! I want so much to know whether they've a fire in winter … Oh Kitty, how nice it would be if we could only get through into Looking-glass House! I'm sure it's got, oh! Such beautiful things in it!" (Carroll, 1982: 127, emphasis in original). The mirror is therefore the passage which provides the link between Alice's two worlds. In the same fashion, in *Belle de jour*, after her first dream about the landau, Séverine appears to the viewer reflected in the bathroom mirror, where we also see Pierre's



Figure 23.2 *Belle de jour* 2. Robert and Raymond Hakim, Paris Film Productions and Five Film.

reflection. And it is facing this same mirror that we find the young woman after the first day in Madame Anaïs's flat, which entwines the episodes of prostitution with a certain amount of fantasizing. The movement from one world to another has for Séverine an element of a personal quest about it, involving confrontation with and free access to her subconscious. Antonio Ballesteros's analysis of Alice echoes that of Buñuel's heroine:

> The search which Alice carries out on the other side of the mirror implies the persecution of the problematic and split identity. The inverted "reality" of the tale symbolizes – among other things – the necessity of becoming one with "the other," with the figure who gazes out at us from the other side of the mirror. Alice … tries to become one with her own image in a recurrence which has obvious shades of narcissism. (Ballesteros, 1998: 259)

Alice expresses this very clearly: "'Who in the world am I?' Ah, *that's* the great puzzle!" (Carroll, 1982: 18, emphasis in original), in the same way that the other characters – such as the caterpillar and the Queen of Hearts – keep on asking her: "*Who* are you?" (Carroll, 1982: 40, 71, emphasis in original). Moreover, in just as authoritarian a fashion Charlotte asks Séverine: "Who are you?" This line is totally incoherent because of its suddenly aggressive tone, Charlotte having always been very friendly with Séverine. Furthermore she uses the more formal *vous* in addressing Séverine, whereas until that moment she had always used the more familiar *tu*, and indeed continues to do so subsequently. Self-knowledge, which involves splitting one's personality, has a deep initiatory value:

> Since the image of herself that Alice perceives is not to her taste (she does not manage to identify with it) Alice goes from childhood ("her" side of the mirror) to experience (the "other" side), the latter being the area where she expresses maturity and – with the image from the game of chess – the place where she must crown herself queen, or a mature woman. (Ballesteros, 1998: 259–260)

In Buñuel's cinema – *Él* (This Strange Passion, 1953), *Ensayo de un crimen*, aka *La vida criminal de Archibaldo de la Cruz* (Rehearsal for a Crime, aka The Criminal Life of Archibaldo de la Cruz, 1955), *Viridiana* (1961), *Cet obscur objet du désir*, and so on – the approach leading to self-knowledge and maturity is sexual experience. Without a blossoming sexuality, Séverine cannot be a woman. It is not insignificant therefore that the heroine of the film reminds us at times of a child, due to her skirts, which are longer than the fashion of the time dictated, and her hair arranged in a ponytail, revealing her forehead. Her fairness of appearance completes the evocation of the English heroine, Alice.[9] Séverine's childish looks are pointed out several times by the men around her. Whilst Pierre gently remarks to her: "Will you never grow up, then?," Husson more sarcastically says: "You have a very pretty dress on … you look like a sexually precocious schoolgirl," when he sees her.

For both of these heroines, their quest involves confronting what makes up their daydreams. One of Alice's lines clearly implies that she goes through the mirror thanks to imagination alone: "Let's pretend there's a way of getting through into it, somehow, Kitty. Let's pretend the glass has got all soft like gauze, so that we can get through. Why, it's turning into a sort of mist now, I declare! It'll be easy enough to get through" (Carroll, 1982: 127–128). In the same way, for Buñuel, Séverine's dreams and her decision to become a prostitute respond to her desire to fulfill her fantasies. Dream and reality can, at first sight, be differentiated, and indeed they are differentiated. However, the two quests involve a reflection – for the heroines as for the viewers – on the pertinence of this division of events.

Right from the very first minutes of the film, the viewer knows that Séverine is dreaming, and that at these times the dream is depicted on screen. As far as the first sequence is concerned, the dream scene fits into the cinematic text in classical fashion, with Pierre's off-screen voice talking over the image of Séverine in the landau driver's arms, then bringing Séverine's thoughts back to reality. This applies to the three daydreams which follow – the mud-throwing in the Camargue, the café in the mountains, and the duel in the forest. In the Camargue, the characters' speech is pronounced, although they do not move their lips, and jump cuts are used for the mud which is thrown at Séverine's face. Several background noises spring up in an incoherent manner: the noise of stormy waves invades the soundtrack when Pierre finds Séverine with facial injuries, miaowing and bells mark the arrival of the herd of bulls, and so forth. In short, these scenes start after shots where Séverine is lost in thought.

However, a problem of definition fairly rapidly arises regarding two secondary tales told by Séverine. The first is the one in which she is shown as a child in the arms of the plumber – it is difficult to decide whether this is a memory or a fantasy.

This ambiguity arises from the tale's status – it was told by the heroine, who has often made reference to imaginary events. Furthermore, this image appears when Séverine is looking into the mirror, which in the first sequence was the object through which the young woman seemed to pass from one level to the other, from reality to imagination. Because of the hypothetically real origins of this shot (as a memory), we can see here a subversion of the narrative – the secondary tales might not all be imaginary – and more particularly a subversion of the codes which organize this narrative, in this case that the mirror does not necessarily mark the passage from the real to the imaginary but merely denotes an introspective attitude on the part of the heroine. In short, it could be the memory of a fantasy or possibly a memory altered by fantasy. The same dimension appears again in the other scene recalled by Séverine where, as a child, she refuses to eat the host on the day of her first communion. This scene could simply be there as an explanation – feeling sullied after the encounter with the plumber, she considers herself unworthy of receiving the body of Christ – if it did not occur when the young woman is climbing the stairs to Madame Anaïs's flat. More than a memory, this could be one of Séverine's fantasies, expressing her refusal of purity as defined by Catholic ideology and her decision to give free rein to her sexuality.

The conclusion which these secondary tales invite us to arrive at is illustrated by the sequence with the Duke, where the two levels are mixed together to such an extent that the viewer can no longer ignore the phenomenon, which hitherto had simply rested on ambiguity. Although this scene is inserted into the continuity of the film by basic editing, it ends in identical fashion to the first sequence in the couple's bedroom. Admittedly, this time we do not see Séverine's reflection in the mirror but Pierre, who is already in bed, calls his wife who answers him from the bathroom. She is therefore once again standing before the mirror, and necessarily reflected in it. The situation which is presented by the sequence with the Duke fuses the reappearance of certain fantasizing elements with others which are, at first sight, based in reality. Hence we see the landau and its drivers again. Subsequently, the butler asks the Duke from behind the door whether he should "let the cats in." Moreover, the situation set up by the aristocrat is a direct reproduction of one from Sade's work, much like the first dream in the forest. Finally, Séverine admits to the Duke that she goes to the café where they met "every day, in thought." Yet although until this moment the young woman has appeared in her fantasies under her bourgeois identity, she turns up here as Belle de jour, accepting her status as a prostitute and taking money in return for her participation in the ceremony. The perverted development of the scene, contrary to the first daydream, is placed in the confines of a reconstitution whose organized nature is underlined, if only by the instructions given to Séverine by the butler to make the simulation a success. The situation appears therefore to lean toward realism, even if a certain ambiguity lingers: if Séverine is only free from two o'clock to five o'clock in the afternoon, how can she possibly go to the Duke's castle which is situated "an hour from Paris"? These "problematic" secondary tales appear to

have the purpose of preparing the viewer for the fusion of reality and fantasizing which occurs during the final sequence of the film.

In *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, the final return to reality forces us to view the preceding events as a fantasy, whilst the beginning of the dream – when Alice is listening to her sister reading – is indeterminable. Inversely in *Through the Looking-Glass*, whereas the start presents the passage to the other side of the mirror as phantasmagorical, the return to reality is surrounded by uncertainty. Previously, upon finding the Red King sleeping, Tweedledee and Tweedledum admitted to Alice that she was the subject of his dream:

> "And if he left off dreaming about you, where do you suppose you'd be?"
> "Where I am now, of course," said Alice.
> "Not you!" Tweedledee retorted contemptuously. "You'd be nowhere. Why, you're only a sort of thing in his dream!"
> "If that there King was to wake," added Tweedledum, "you'd go out – bang! – just like a candle."
>
> (Carroll, 1982: 167–168)

At the end of the novel, and following this exchange, Alice wonders: "Now, Kitty, let's consider who it was that dreamed it all. This is a serious question, my dear … You see Kitty, it *must* have been either me or the Red King. He was part of my dream of course – but then I was part of his dream, too!" (Carroll, 1982: 244, emphasis in original). Since the heroine continues to exist, that means that the King's dream is continuing and, since the King was part of her dream, the latter is also continuing. Alice is no longer capable of distinguishing between the two and the reader closes the book wondering about the truthfulness of this return to reality. The same conclusion sets in during the final sequence of *Belle de jour*. As with the episode with the Duke, we find elements which seem to belong to reality – the bourgeois flat, Pierre's handicap, the arrival of Husson – and others which fall within the realm of fantasy – the cats, the bells, the path in the woods, and the landau. However, as stated above, what we see here is a fusion of the two layers whereas with the Duke it is possible to differentiate between the two, allowing us to divide up dream and reality, which seem to be superimposed.

The sequence seems to be developing within the confines of reality at the beginning – the heroine is in her home, accompanied by her handicapped husband – a reality where dreams and fantasies are inaccessible. Séverine recognizes this in her conversation with Pierre: since his accident, she "no longer dreams." Yet dreams are not entirely absent and seem ready to re-emerge to join with reality at any moment. The first shot of this final sequence shows us a superimposition of Séverine's bourgeois street and of the path in the woods similar to the one in the first scene. The two worlds do not melt into one another quite yet, despite the use of visual effects, because an opposite camera movement is used for each: a descending panoramic shot for the road contrasting with the rising panoramic shot of the

woods. But it is difficult to define these two images as imaginary or real because rain is present on the soundtrack but absent from the picture. The rain comes from the previous shot where the heroine is looking out of her window.

Although, when she is tending to Pierre, Séverine is once again reflected in the mirror above the chimney, it is the mechanical noise of the clock which particularly brings us closer to fantasy again, evoking the regular sound of the bells associated with the horses and bulls, seemingly signaling the arrival of a new development.[10] Because, of course, this mechanical noise mainly serves to introduce the theme of time which was at the heart of the prostitution scenes – from two until five in the afternoon – explicitly separating the two worlds. Time is a constant preoccupation for Séverine.[11]

Husson arrives just at the right moment in this process. The maid Maria's announcement of his unexpected arrival is made off screen and there is no reverse shot to show us this member of the house's staff. And yet the images of Séverine as a child in the arms of the plumber, like those of her first communion, were introduced by the voice of her mother or by that of the priest, also characters whom the viewer does not see. Séverine decides to go and greet Husson, passes yet again in front of the mirror and crosses the threshold of the study. If we take into account these various signs, this visit could well be a figment of Séverine's imagination, all the more so given that we are not given access to the meeting between the two men. Whilst Séverine's double life is being revealed to Pierre, the former decides to walk into the hallway and, on her way out of the room, she passes in front of the mirror.

Yet new signs appear to signal the end of the dream. We hear the clock. This new sound must be heard subjectively, because the living-room doors are shut.[12] It is five o'clock, the time at which the young woman had to leave the brothel. This evokes some fairy tales, such as *Cinderella*, in which once time has run out the illusion vanishes and the various objects return to their true shapes whilst the heroine becomes a servant again. These elements add to the impression that the power Séverine once had is slipping away.

However, the development of the sequence contradicts the above conclusions. Although Séverine comes back into the living-room, going through the study on the way as if she had never left it, there is a shot situated in the hall just before this. Whereas we thought that we were once again emerging from a phantasmagorical digression, Husson comes out of the living-room. In the end, we come across the same signs, as if nothing had ever happened. The mechanism of the clock is audible again, which puts us back into the situation which preceded the arrival of Husson. Séverine goes up to her husband, then sits on the sofa apparently disappointed. And this is where several signs seem to indicate another transition toward a dream. The traveling shot of the pensive Séverine evokes the same shot of Pierre before Husson arrived. Between the two shots, the hands of the invalid change position. Séverine stands up, looks at him and then lowers her eyes, as if she realizes that there has been a mistake. We might already be in a dream sequence except that the clock is audible on the soundtrack. She raises her head again and smiles. The bells

which we have already heard during other daydreams take over from the clock. In the next shot, Pierre asks Séverine what she is thinking about, and then the reverse shot shows us the young woman in exactly the same position that she was in before Pierre's hands moved, as if the few preceding shots were again an imaginary interlude. However, it seems to be this new shot which begins the fantasizing sequence, as Pierre miraculously gets out of his wheelchair. The soundtrack brings together several elements which belong to dream sequences: apart from the bulls' bells we hear cats miaowing, a sound evoked in the first daydream at the Duke's residence. The contradictions become more apparent. Thus Pierre's question – "What are you thinking about, Séverine?" – becomes an obvious reference to the start of the film. However, it is not so easy to interpret this question: the same question could signal a return to reality, indicating that everything which has gone before was the young woman's daydream. Indeed, the couple act as if the dramatic events which we have been told about never happened at all. In the same way, by a phenomenon of reversed parallelism, this line could open the way to a dream sequence, as Pierre is still wearing his invalid's dressing gown. In addition, a year has definitely passed since the first sequence because Pierre informs his wife that he has managed "to get a fortnight off in February, like last year." It is at this moment that the two levels, dream and reality, genuinely melt into one another, when the re-apparition of dreamlike motifs, implying that Séverine will continue to dream, do not alter the look of satisfaction on her face, like a sign that her quest has been successful.

It is therefore revealing to see that the codes which could legitimately be interpreted as marking the passage from reality to the imaginary have only served to mislead us. By seeming to open and close several fantastical digressions, they have canceled themselves out by grace of systematic contradictions, with the sole aim of demonstrating that the film's reality goes beyond such distinctions and proceeds in a unified Surreality which can only be attained by challenging our rational way of reading a piece of work.

Just like at the end of *Through the Looking-Glass*, it is impossible to draw a distinction between dream and reality in *Belle de jour*, but the consequences of Buñuel's creative process differ from those of Carroll's. As far as the latter is concerned, the very fact that the reader wonders about the truthfulness of the return to reality ensures the fantasy element of the book in that the reader cannot be sure about it. Yet this lack of certainty does not exist in Buñuel's film. It is not, in this case, about the heroine no longer knowing the difference between dream and reality, but rather that her imaginary world has blended with what, until this moment, has made up her reality.

The fusion which takes place in this final sequence comes from the fact that Séverine must have free access to her subconscious as a precondition to the success of her quest. This phenomenon prevents any rational understanding, and anyway Séverine's personal development makes us understand that any division of events between the real and the imaginary is of no importance at all. Jean-Claude Carrière

sums up the shared creation with Buñuel thus: "The more we worked together, the more we developed the idea that 'reality' is no more real or true than the imaginary. We are made up of both. Our imagination is just as real and just as powerful as what we call 'reality'" (cited in Duprat, 2011: 196). *Belle de jour* simply sought to depict the psyche of a young woman by adopting her subjective viewpoint of what was real, in such a fashion that we are given to understand that Séverine's daydreams have contaminated the more realistic scenes. But the film began by asking us to distinguish between dream and reality, not only separating rational events from less rational ones but also, and most particularly as we have seen, by adopting a classical cinematographic construction whereby dreams are signaled as such as by elements within the film. From the adoption of this approach to its eventual subversion, the work's approach comes from a demonstration which leads us to the final conclusion via the dynamiting of the cinematic codes employed. The approach therefore appears to be a typically surrealist one and insofar as Séverine seems to attain and obtain what Buñuel defined as Surrealism – "this free access to the depths of the human psyche, recognized and hoped for, this appeal to the irrational, to obscurity, to all of the impulses which come from our inner selves" (Buñuel, 1982: 149) – she appears to be a kind of homage to the avant-garde movement.[13]

Nevertheless, *Belle de jour* represents the opposite of the conceptual deconstruction of a character which took place in *Un chien andalou* (1929). The Surrealism of the 1967 film is there to serve the narrative and to help construct the story. Indeed, although the final sequence does preserve the enigmatic nature of the heroine and cancels out any explicative dimension of the story, it does constitute a logical conclusion, considering Séverine's wish to blend her fantasies with her reality. The words of Jean-Claude Carrière explaining his writing back up this conception: "The problem with the ending has been that the two paths of the film, the path of reality and the fantastical path, must necessarily come together. In one way or another, we could not end the film by leaving both paths open" (Roux, 2002). Surrealism thus has the purpose of constructing a story as opposed to destroying it. Whilst in *Belle de jour* Surrealism re-emerges apparently devoid of its meaning, this is only because the world itself no longer has a meaning. Surrealism can no longer be Surrealism due to society's ideological confusion, depicted at length in the final French films.

The intertextual presence of the *Alice* books in *Belle de jour* therefore sheds light upon the fundamentally subversive character of the writing of Luis Buñuel's final French films and manifests his many links with Lewis Carroll's poetics. In addition, the memory of Alice's adventures opens the way to a new reading of the film by reinforcing the fantasizing aspect of the brothel scenes, which are at first sight based in reality. Whilst we can imagine Séverine as most probably a subconscious homage to an author who was a forerunner of Surrealism just at a time when Buñuel was questioning the movement's legacy, it is by exceeding the fantastical nature of the ending of *Through the Looking-Glass* that *Belle de jour* revisits

Surrealism. However, despite this, the memory of Alice is never quite forgotten as it is through his recreation, with Séverine, of the little girl's approach that Buñuel turns the reference to Surrealism into a dramatic process which builds the story before in turn subverting it. In this sense, although the director rejects Lewis Carroll's ending to the story, his work takes a more fantastical turn because of the strangeness his writing manifests, constantly floating between perpetual subversion and respect for the references he employs. Underlining this rigor, Jean-Claude Carrière states: "His films always followed a narrow path between many dangers. Too fantastical, too absurd, too mystifying, *demasiadas bromas* [too many pranks] … He wanted his films to contain a powerful strangeness without being strange" (cited in López Linares and Rioyo, 2000). And that is a contradiction which also evokes the logic of Lewis Carroll's work.

Translated from the French by Matthew Cast

Notes

1 We shall use here the definitions put forward by Genette, for whom intertextuality is a "relationship whereby two or more texts are present at the same place and time, that is to say eidetically and most frequently by the presence of one text within another. In its most explicit and most literal form; it is the traditional practice of … quotation … plagiarism in its less explicit and less literal form, that of allusion" (Genette, 1982: 8). As to architextuality, Genette presents it as "an entirely silent relationship, which only articulates at most a paratextual reference … of purely taxonomical pertinence … In any case, the text is not supposed to know, and thus declare, its generic character" (Genette, 1982: 11).

2 As one of these marks, we can cite Bécquer's adaptation, *El beso* (The Kiss), which constitutes the first sequence of *Le Fantôme de la liberté*, as well as the reference to the episode of the bloody nun in *The Monk* – Matthew Lewis – in the last part of *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie*.

3 We shall adhere to Tzvetan Todorov's definition here: "The fantastic is the hesitation experienced by a being who only knows natural laws when faced with an apparently supernatural event" (Todorov, 1970: 29).

4 "Carroll's parodies of moral poems and informational literature do not simply use imitative words, style, and morality but invert the attitudes and ideas of the world parodied, and, in so doing, they upend what passed for morality and utility in eighteenth – and early nineteenth – century children's books" (Reichertz, 1997: 49).

5 This episode retains an obvious intertextual relationship with Lewis Carroll because the little girl is, as much in Buñuel's work as in Carroll's, on the outside of the collective lunacy surrounding her, continually indicating her presence.

6 This can only be said to have been fully proven by the critical reception of Walt Disney's *Alice in Wonderland* in 1951: "Intended for children, this film is in reality one of the most authentic works of fantasy in cinematic history. Although the story is somewhat altered, Lewis Carroll's world is very faithfully recreated. It is a genuine osmosis between Poe's finest short stories and Hokusai's most horrifying compositions. We know

what became of the film. Considered terrifying by the American distributors, and having given nightmares to all the children who saw it, it was swiftly removed from circulation" (Brion, 1967: 8). The cartoon aesthetics of this film, making the characters more amusing, endearing, and reassuring for an audience of children could not cancel out the deeply disturbing dimension which comes from the psychological, spatial, and temporal discontinuity provided by Carroll and preserved by Disney.

7 This recalls the compliment which Husson, her lover, pays her: "You heal so very well."

8 "The furtive kiss which the former (Husson) places on Séverine's cheek, almost as if he is giving her money for a journey into an unknown land, is matched by the kiss, which is just as discreet, given by Madame Anaïs when she welcomes the new resident into her house" (Drouzy, 1978: 131).

9 This is a comparison based not only on the Walt Disney heroine, but also on the illustrations by John Tenniel.

10 In addition, the ticking of the clock and the chimes are frequently used sound effects in the fantasizing scenes of Buñuel's final films. In *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie*, these sounds appear during the secondary tales of the lieutenant and the sergeant.

11 Does she not after all say to Pierre: "I think it is time. I will give you your drops"? The line is pronounced out of shot and accompanies a close-up of Pierre, which is a rare cinematographic technique for Buñuel to use to instill a feeling of strangeness.

12 We hear Maria shutting them after announcing Husson's arrival. Furthermore, when the latter leaves, we become aware that they were quite shut during the discussion between the men. Unless Husson didn't come at all, the living-room doors were open all along and Pierre is alone whilst Séverine is walking in the hallway.

13 In *Le second manifeste*, André Breton writes of this "point of the mind from where life and death, the real and the imaginary, the past and the future, the communicable and the incommunicable, the high and the low are no longer perceived as contradictory. And it would be a vain task to look in surrealist activity for another motivation than that of finding this very point" (Breton, 1994: 72–73).

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24

Splitting Doubles

Ángela Molina and the Art of Screen Acting in *Cet obscur objet du désir*

Peter William Evans

In *On Love … Aspects of a Single Theme*, José Ortega y Gasset considers the differences between love and desire. Where desire is possessive, requiring the object to be absorbed by the individual who desires, love, eternally unsatisfied, takes the individual out of him or herself: "Love is perhaps the supreme activity which nature affords anyone for going out of himself towards something else. It does not gravitate towards me, but I towards it" (Ortega y Gasset, 1967: 11). Love is centrifugal, endlessly driving the lover beyond the self, toward its object, stirred into action on behalf of the beloved, in a process of "perennial vivification" (Ortega y Gasset, 1967: 18). The choice of object is determined by values lying hidden in our secret selves, revealed neither through acts, words, nor will – a kind of deterrent to our real nature – but through irrational impulses, like love, finding expression in facial and bodily gestures that open the "trapdoors and crevices through which we can see the self behind the mask" (Ortega y Gasset, 1967: 73).

Informed by psychoanalysis, Buñuel's films seem also to nod toward Ortega y Gasset, whom he met (Buñuel, 1982: 70), whose cool, modernist style he clearly admired. *Cet obscur objet du désir* (That Obscure Object of Desire, 1977) perfectly illustrates not only the irrational impulses that drive lovers toward their objects of desire but also the notion that love or desire defines selfhood. Buñuel's choice of a conceptual title – explained as a gloss on the phrase "pâle objet du désir" (pale object of desire), used by Pierre Loüys in the novel *La femme et le pantin* (The Woman and the Puppet, 1898) that inspired the film – invites speculation on the lovers' mutual attraction.[1] How far are Mathieu/Mateo and Conchita drawn to each other through what Ortega y Gasset refers to as the possessive nature of desire? How much – regardless

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Figure 24.1 Ángela Molina in *Cet obscur objet du désir*. Greenwich Film Productions, Les Films Galaxie, and In-Cine Compañía Industrial Cinematográfica.

of the choice of the word "désir" in Buñuel's title – through love? The obscurity in question may prompt reflection, through Ortega y Gasset, on the blurred meanings and overlaps between love and desire, but Lacan's notion of desire as a lack, something never satisfied – as opposed to a need or demand – provides an equally compelling perspective on the behavior of a lover whose internal muddles are played out in his object of desire (see Williams, 1981). In what follows, and bearing in mind especially Ortega y Gasset's comments on facial expression and gesture, my focus will be, in three scenes, on Mathieu's appeal for Conchita: her first appearance in the film, followed by scenes at her Paris flat and her house in Seville. Her performances here provide keys to the film's musings on choice in human relationships. My commentary on Ángela Molina as one of the two Conchitas forms the prologue to an interview where she discusses her work on *Cet obscur objet du désir* (Figure 24.1).

Andrew Klevan's point, in a general study of screen acting on effective performance arising from "coherence and harmony with the film's environment" (Klevan, 2005: 5) – where environment here refers to both on- and off-screen frames of reference – helps provide mechanisms for appraisal of Ángela Molina's performance in *Cet obscur objet du désir*. In the early stages of filming, Maria Schneider was dismissed from the role of Conchita, and replaced by two actresses, Carole Bouquet and Ángela Molina. *Cet obscur objet du désir* spotlights the *amour fou* (mad, passionate, obsessive love) of Mathieu (Fernando Rey), a well-to-do middle-aged, Paris-based widower, for an attractive, socially inferior younger woman of slender means. As has often been remarked, Carole Bouquet provided Gallic chic and reserve, Ángela Molina a blend of vulnerability, earthy sexiness (Sánchez

Vidal, 1984: 376), and humor. Her performance as the coquettish, free-spirited Conchita is memorable especially for scenes where she toys with her love-crazed admirer by giving contradictory signals of encouragement and deterrence, attracted to his suave charm, authority, and wealth, yet simultaneously repelled by his bourgeois manners, seemingly preferring the youthful glamour of El Morenito, her young lover (or Platonic friend?) to the sybaritic portliness of his impatient aging rival. Humiliation reaches its lowest point when, as Ángela Molina's Conchita strips off to make love (or to pretend to make love) to El Morenito, Mathieu stands impotently locked outside the grille-iron gate of the house in Seville he has just bought his cruel lady, to watch her perform an act of ultimate betrayal. He responds by roughing her up when she calls to see him the following morning to explain that her seduction of El Morenito was only pretense. Vowing never to set eyes on her again, like most victims of *amour fou* he is cursed by recidivism so, naturally, the pair once more fall prey to the torments and conflicts of their magnificent love–hate obsession. Conchita seeks him out on the Paris-bound train, her face showing signs of the brutal encounter with her forlorn lover, and the terrible cycle of their mad passion is repeated.

Ángela Molina perfectly captures the essence of Conchita. By turns approachable and withdrawn, she is a portrait of scoffing femininity, at once amused and seduced by the power she wields over her infatuated gallant, a helpless victim to her capricious charm. As Franciso Umbral puts it (Umbral, 1977), she is a devil with the face of an angel. Like her counterpart played by Silvia Pinal in *Simón del desierto* (Simon of the Desert, 1965), another of Buñuel's she-devils, she moves skillfully between easy eroticism, sadomasochistic submission to male authority, and pitiless mockery of Mathieu's pursuit of a fugitive quarry. Her regular features and lithe and graceful beauty caught Buñuel's eye in the film that drew her to public attention in Spain, *Las largas vacaciones del 36* (The Long Vacations of 36, 1976), where she played an illiterate maid in a bourgeois household spending the summer holidays near Barcelona at the outset of the Spanish Civil War. Undoubtedly one of Spain's leading film actresses of the last 30 years or so, she has won prizes at home and abroad in recognition of her performances in some of Spanish cinema's most accomplished films.

Ángela Molina's First Appearance: Conchita in Mathieu's Bedroom

Conchita enters Mathieu's room after dinner. He wears a smoking jacket, she the maid's black and white uniform, so irresistible to Celestine's fetishistic master in *Le Journal d'une femme de chambre* (Diary of a Chambermaid, 1964). First seen in medium close shot, bearing a tray with a bottle of chartreuse and glasses, her head slightly tilted to the left, she has an inquisitive, cheery demeanor. The close shot shows a strikingly attractive face on a body that *Diario 16* referred to as "un cuerpo

que es todo sensualidad y fertilidad" (a body that is all sensuality and fertility; Anon., 1987). Dark, winsome eyes animate her expression; her auburn, slightly untamed hair is pulled away from a face framed by dangling earrings that hint at her Andalusian origins. As she moves forward, the cheery expression spreads into a characteristically warm smile. Having deposited her tray, she attempts to leave the room, but as she bids Mathieu goodnight, he stalls her with the command "No, no. Shut the door and come here." The composition of the frame in this medium two-shot defines the power relations between Conchita and Mathieu. Standing behind a chair, her hands loosely placed on it, Conchita occupies the left of the frame. At the bottom right-hand corner, positioned in front of a white lampshade and a china vase, we see Mathieu's head. He is seated, and looks up at Conchita. The blocking of the actors hints even at this early stage at the menial position he will continue to hold in the ebb and flow of their relationship. Towering above Mathieu, Conchita already stakes out her claims over him. The relaxed pose of the hands on the chair indicates through a simple gesture self-composure and control. Beyond their naturalistic purpose, the black and white colors – reprised in various other items of costume – of her outfit fittingly represent clear but also obscure impulses, early color-coded signs of the teasing seductress with a cruel streak.

Eventually Conchita pulls her hands away from the chair; she now touches her hair, a sign of nerves perhaps, or of self-affirmation, even of narcissism. She rewards Mathieu with a smile blending innocence and experience, playing her part in the eternal comedy of conflicted romance. As the conversation turns to her previous employers and, as she puts it, to "being brought up the old-fashioned way," she moves further away, asking Mathieu whether he would like her to turn down the bed. The question is too piquant for Mathieu, who wastes little time in abandoning his chair to take up a position beside her. His nearness reverses the previous pattern of spatial relationships in the frame but, even so, despite Mathieu's taller stature, Conchita is not cowed. She remains self-assured, her smile still fixed as she explains in reply to his questions about her origins that she hails from Andalusia, and that she is fatherless (her army officer father committed suicide six years earlier), an unconscious revelation of her eventual attraction to Mathieu's parental authority. Thirty-eight years younger than Fernando Rey (1917–1994), Ángela Molina (b.1955) is ideally cast as another of Buñuel's seductive daughters.

The camera zooms in on Ángela Molina's face to capture her declared loathing of work and passion for dancing, now smiling, now avoiding Mathieu's eyes, her combination of warmth and indifference continuing to suggest self-control and authority, the to-and-fro of their developing rapport still reflected through movement in the frame. At one point, a close shot reveals Mathieu at the right of the frame, positioned adjacent to Conchita's profile on the left. Though we see more of Mathieu's body, Conchita's occupies more space. Only 18, she is clearly no ingénue. Whether standing beside and looking down on her, or when touching her head with both hands as he remarks "your hair is so silky," Mathieu never wrests control from Conchita who, as she finally turns her face away from him

when he tries to kiss her, reacts more in condescension than shock. Her smile, by now more knowing, is restored as she takes her leave, ignoring Mathieu's pathetic final appeal, "I have something serious to tell you," abandoning him to the solitude and silence of his libidinally stifled bedroom. Mathieu picks up and hurls a pillow onto his bed, sits down on its side, and looks directly at the camera in a shot that appeals to the viewer's empathy.

As Ortega y Gasset argues, "true love best recognises itself and, so to speak, measures and calculates itself by the pain and suffering of which it is capable. The woman in love prefers the anguish which her beloved causes her to painless indifference" (Ortega y Gasset, 1967: 12). In this scene Conchita establishes the pattern for seeking repetitive confirmation of her admirer's devotion through pain. The *amour fou* of the patrician Mathieu for the proletarian Conchita –also, in surrealist tradition, characteristically overcoming class barriers – exemplifies Ortega y Gasset's reflection. Conchita, of course, feels she cannot play the trump card of her virginity (if indeed we truly believe she is a *mocita*, a virgin) until she is certain of Mathieu's commitment to her. The interest of her middle-aged romantic libertine might cool, she suspects, if she were to surrender her most valued asset. And yet, whatever their shared misapprehensions, the magnetic pull toward each other that survives all crises – even the sight of Conchita making love, whether in pretense or reality, to her handsome young friend El Morenito – means that love, in Ortega y Gasset's sense, pulls them together. In Mathieu's bedroom, Fernando Rey's hang-dog expression, and Ángela Molina's understated self-confident, amused, superior air, offer hints of the more emphatic variants of these visual and verbal markers of character in the later torments to which she subjects her hapless, often baffled, lover.

Conchita at Home

Having already been visited by Mathieu at her flat, remonstrating with him for being propositioned for sex, Conchita welcomes him there a second time, a meeting that also brings him once more into contact with El Morenito, the fastidious assailant who demanded no more than eight hundred francs from his mugged victim in Lausanne. Ángela Molina's movements to the sounds of El Morenito's guitar chords demonstrate the expertise of a qualified flamenco dancer. We see her at first from a variety of angles, before the camera captures in medium shot her dancing feet. As she hears Mathieu approach, she stops and, now viewed from the side, breaks into that familiar engaging smile and remarks: "Is it you?" Mathieu acts proprietorially by touching her chest and commenting on her perspiration before El Morenito enters the frame to form with the others an incongruous picture of an ill-matched secular trinity. Mathieu occupies the center of the frame, dressed formally in an expensive fawn-colored overcoat, flanked by El Morenito on

the right, sporting an informal blue shirt, and Conchita on Mathieu's left, in a colorful blouse. The air of informality created by the young couple that contrasts so sharply with Mathieu's out-of-place conservative chic is further stressed on El Morenito's departure. After her flamenco exertions, Conchita removes her top to wash her upper body. In a medium two-shot Mathieu watches Conchita, now clad only in her underwear, as she performs her ablutions and hums a popular tune. Molina's relaxed pose and movements convincingly display the relaxed air of a woman at ease with her body, neither narcissistically nor coyly self-conscious of its beauty. The contrast in age, background, and taste is further emphasized in Mathieu's attempt to make a favorable impression through the gift of a handbag that in its betrayal of Mathieu's unfamiliarity with youthful fashions only arouses Conchita's amusement over a present she tactlessly suggests would be more appreciated by her mother.

The sequence further demonstrates Molina's skill in relying on a range of facial expressions to project the enigma of Conchita's personality. From smiles and chuckles, to glances out of the frame avoiding direct contact and retaining self-control – especially after Mathieu plants a furtive kiss on her cheek – to varied linguistic registers – as when she commands him to be seated while she sings a teasing song – Molina's range of acting versatility keeps Mathieu and the audience guessing as to Conchita's true designs on her foolish lover:

Alguien nos escucha? No.	[Is anyone listening? No.]
Quieres que te diga? Sí.	[Shall I tell you? Yes.]
Quieres otro amante? No.	[Do you want another lover? No.]
Quieres que lo sea? Sí.	[Shall I be your lover? Yes.]

Her song provides the background to her mimed shaving of Mathieu. While ministering to him, her black and white flower-patterned kimono remains unbuttoned, exposing underwear and midriff. An air is created of mixed domesticity and sensuality: Molina, not Bouquet, is Buñuel's significant choice for a scene where Conchita plays both the obedient female who attends to her partner's grooming, and the seductress who never relaxes her sexual authority over him. The toying of Molina's Conchita with Mathieu's feelings becomes more pronounced when, prefacing her gesture with another characteristic chuckle, she kisses him fully on the mouth, an overture abruptly and predictably halted when, as his hand begins to travel up her thigh, she confounds him with the words, "What are you doing?" Her transformation from temptress to tease – "I'm not that kind of girl" – trading passion for prudery, availability for prohibition, marks the first stage of Mathieu's calvary of bewilderment and frustration. Conchita suddenly switches from the sensual earth goddess of Mathieu's imagination to the obedient daughter of a mother who claims on returning to her flat that their souls are straighter than the index finger of St John.[2] To emphasize the point, as if in defense of her threatened virginity Molina places her hands firmly on her lap. Buñuel resorts, here as on many other occasions, to religious allusion at opportune moments to reaffirm a

tendency – shared with another of his admired literary precursors, Valle-Inclán – to extract sexual frisson from sacrilege. Molina's contradictory, almost schizophrenic playing of her role, here swaying between licentiousness and demureness, is a master class in the art of performative ambiguity.

Conchita. Not the End

The most poignant moment in their fraught relationship occurs in Seville at the house bought for Conchita by Mathieu. Conchita's mercilessness becomes progressively more painful. For instance, her amused response to Mathieu's discovery of El Morenito's presence in her bedroom at Mathieu's country house, as well as her coolness toward him in a later scene by the Seine, betray indifference to the suffering of her forlorn lover. In the bedroom scene Conchita's pitiless treatment of Mathieu is conveyed through Molina's uncontrollable giggles and practiced wide-eyed innocence, while in the river scene the spatial distance, costume, and props register estrangement. Both are dressed smartly: at the edge of the frame, leaning against a fence with the river at her back, stands a peevish and defiant Conchita; Mathieu, hatted and overcoated, occupies the left of the frame, holding one of the ubiquitous sacks that he and various other characters carry around in the film. Like the box handed to Séverine by the Japanese client *chez* Madame Anaïs in *Belle de jour* (1967), like its stripy forerunner owned by the impetuous lover in *Un chien andalou* (An Andalusian Dog, 1929), its contents are mysterious. But, since Martin (Mathieu's valet) has already mentioned his friend's view that women are "sacks of excrement," we are challenged to make the connection. If we do so, we are aligned with Martin's friend and all misogynists. If we do not, Mathieu's emotional torture encourages a reading of the sack as, at the very least, a symbol of the burden carried by all tormented lovers, women as well as men. The conversation that unfolds in this scene measures the characters' emotional distance. Conchita's remarks – affectionate, subdued – contradict gesture and pose. Her refusals to gratify Mathieu's sexual pleading appear unreasonable and, seemingly, echo Cartesian cultural divisions between body and spirit. Her dismissal of Mathieu's claim that sexual intercourse would seal their love is cryptic:

> CONCHITA: I love you too. But I don't feel like making love with you. We're together. You hold me in your arms, I caress you, you have my legs, my mouth, my breasts. So why make love?

Is it prompted by the fear that consummation would lead to Mathieu's cooling interest? Is it the remark of someone at once attracted to the status and wealth of an older man yet repelled by his senescent body? Or is it the conviction of a woman whose idea of sexual pleasure is not focused exclusively on the act of penetration?

Bunuel's art of multi-textured psychological ambiguity holds all possibilities in tension. Conchita's itemization of her bodily parts seems like a plea for polymorphous perversity, a personal Kama Sutra of diverse sexual pleasures, all too often overlooked in the undistracted pursuit of penetrative intercourse. But her logic only confounds Mathieu, leading him to rely in exasperation on a familiar response: "Because it's normal! It's natural!" Of course it is, but Conchita also has a point, even though her argument loses some of its force in Seville, where, apparently, she feels no compulsion to withhold full sexual favors from El Morenito. These preliminary scenes of despair prepare us for the film's cruelest moment, the agony in the garden of Conchita's new house.

In Seville we become aware, like Mathieu, of his dark lady's presence in the city through the sound of her characteristic cackle, vocal shorthand for mockery of her pitiful admirer. As Ángela Molina herself explains in the interview below, her smiles and laughter defuse tense situations, but they also recall Rita Hayworth's defiance, in *The Loves of Carmen* (1953), of all attempts to tame her shrewish temperament. Mathieu's humiliation outside the house in Seville is prefaced in an earlier scene where, through the grille of a private dwelling, Conchita had offered him her hair to kiss and fondle. Pleasure, we are never allowed to forget, is inseparable from pain. Mathieu is imprisoned by desire. Here the gate grille, later the sign on a building, "Las Cadenas" (The Chains) – passed by him en route to a rendezvous with Conchita – announce his own captivity as well as failure to treat Conchita as a free spirit. After his furious intrusion on her nude dance for the tourists at the flamenco night club, and in response to yet another question about rival lovers, Conchita exclaims: "I have nothing more precious than myself!"

When Mathieu appears in the evening to meet her at her new address, her look of contempt, coupled with her volley of insults, contradicts the earlier sentiments expressed at the flamenco club where a declaration of love, of attraction to his eyes, followed by a hug and a kiss, seemed to nullify all doubt about her true feelings for Mathieu. In her new abode, wearing her black and white flower-patterned kimono, she commands him through the gate grille to kiss her hand, the hem of her robe, and her foot, before dispatching him unceremoniously and derisively, out of her life: "I'm free of you. I loathe you, your touch …"

And yet the powerful claims of love-hatred on these unlikely lovers ensure their eternal inseparability. A further attempt to repair their relationship, symbolized – as Jean-Claude Carrière affirms in his Orion/Studio Canal DVD commentary on the film – by the woman in the arcade window sewing a piece of torn lace, is followed by an explosion. The violence of the terrorist is an apt final image for the explosive relationship of lovers drawn to each other through obscure desires.[3]

Through her interaction with Fernando Rey as Mathieu, Molina's Conchita poignantly, comically, exasperatingly, projects the internal confusion of rival claims and instincts that shape the behavior of all lovers struggling to make sense of their private lives.

Interview with Ángela Molina, held in Madrid, February 19, 2011

Peter William Evans: *How did you get involved in the film?*
Ángela Molina: I was filming *Camada negra* with Manuel Gutiérrez Aragón, and they asked for examples of my work. They wanted to do a test with me in Paris, so I prepared two scenes. Before that test I met Buñuel. It was a rainy day. I was returning from a class, on the metro, and I arrived soaking wet. The previous day I'd seen one of Buñuel's films, and I'd left the cinema with a number of questions boiling in my head. I always get intense about the things I love. Then. Now I just enjoy them. But before, I lived them passionately and in intensive bursts. For instance, a Buñuel film – I could watch it repeatedly. When I went along to see Buñuel I was wearing a sort of hood, and I remember he took it off, and asked where I'd come from. I said from the underground, and so it all began and we talked a great deal about what I was doing, what was going on, who I was. After that they invited me to do the second test in Paris. I enjoyed it very much, and the first meeting I had at the studios seemed like going to see the doctor because – and I've not mentioned this before to anyone – he had to see me naked. There were nude scenes, and I imagine he needed convincing that I was what he required for



Figure 24.2 Luis Buñuel directing Fernando Rey and Ángela Molina. Courtesy of the Filmoteca Española.

his film, or whatever. He had to see the way I looked. I was wearing the same dressing gown that appeared in the film (Figure 24.2).

The black dressing gown?
Yes, the one with white flowers. He put his glasses on. It was a long changing room, and he was at one end of it, and then he said, with an absolutely loving and affectionately paternal smile … let's see, I don't remember what exact word he used, but I knew I had to expose myself. So, I opened my dressing gown for a moment like a little girl, because that's what I was. I was very innocent at that time. And then he put his glasses on immediately and said: "Cover yourself! Cover yourself!" (Laughs) All this as though they were uncovering Tutankhamun's mummy (laughs). It all took place again the following day when we shot the nude scene. I remember the dressing room had some Chinese men in it and, in the studio bar where I went for a coffee, I overheard them say, "We're leaving because there's a nude scene, and we don't do pornographic movies." And then I said, "No, no, I'm the actress! It's not a porno movie! It's a Buñuel film." They paid no attention and left, so all the spectators in this scene were members of the film crew. Virtually all of them. The electrician, [Serge] Silberman the producer, a lot of the decorating team, friends of friends … They were all our people. But it wasn't the first time I'd appeared on screen in the nude. And so when we shot the scene, I remember that what most struck me was his [Buñuel's] voice from beyond the grave, shouting "Cover her! Cover her!" It was as though a murder had been committed, or something (laughs). And then they covered me as though they were trapping (laughs), I don't know (laughs), something that was trying to escape (laughs). But no, I was there and felt increasingly lovingly towards him. Only he could make one experience those kinds of powerful feelings.

How did you feel about working with Buñuel?
I felt really happy. But I didn't think of it as something special at the time. It was … just one more film. One more wonderful opportunity. I didn't realize what an important figure he was in world cinema.

When you first started on the film, I suppose there were preliminary discussions. Did he say anything different? Something that other directors would not perhaps have said? To put you at your ease, I mean.
Perhaps … a relationship beyond words established itself between Buñuel and me. That is … it was a way of being, an attitude, something his personality created in me that gave me total happiness, real security, endless fun and curiosity, towards my work. And above all, as I have often said, it was the first time I'd worked with video, and Buñuel always made us sit down, as though we were at school, with a shot that had already been taken, and explained everything to us: what he liked about the shot, what he might have preferred, the language of gestures, the balance of shots, emotion, and feelings; he spent as much time as necessary, without worrying about how long it took to explain everything very carefully.

And, as to the role of Conchita, did he explain from the start what he wanted from you. How he envisaged the role?
No. Just that we would both be doing it. That we had to be as one, really, that there were no different scenes for us but that he would tell us as we started work who would do which. That's to say that I never did a scene I didn't think I was going to do, and likewise my friend Carole. So it was all natural, just as it should be. And that's how Carole and I both felt. We became very, very good friends. They rented us two apartments, one next to the other. We loved each other very much. We used to share breakfast, whether or not we were filming together. We were full of youthful energy.

But, when you realized that two actresses were to play the same role, didn't you feel this was a little strange?
I thought it would never happen again in the history of the cinema, and I believe it hasn't. It seemed to me a very natural, fantastic thing (Figure 24.3).

But he never explained why he decided to cast two actresses for the same role?
No. He didn't explain it, but I think … I have heard many versions, as you can imagine … except his. I think he didn't want to do without either one of us.

And Maria Schneider had already left? You never saw her on set?
No. She had already left. I heard that Production wanted one thing, that he wanted another … and that it all became very difficult. A choice had to be made … And he said, "OK, I want to do it with both of them"; "they're both going to do it."



Figure 24.3 Carole Bouquet, Ángela Molina, and Luis Buñuel. Courtesy of the Filmoteca Española.

Let's look at some of the key scenes in which you appear, and I'd like to know how Buñuel directed you in them […] How many times did you rehearse a scene?
There was only one take.

One take, but did you rehearse?
With another take to see and work on it.

So where would he have told you to stand?
He'd probably say "you see where the table is, well put the tray there," very clearly. Whatever was natural. The thing is, Buñuel was the best audience I've ever had in my life. He explained everything in a very natural way, that is, if there was any need to explain anything. If not, he would leave things alone. …

We're on the scene where Conchita brings Mathieu a night-time drink. This is an important scene because it's the start, I mean it's the relationship that Mathieu wishes to have with Conchita. […] What is your reaction?
… I've always wondered why I smiled so much. … It's a way of de-dramatizing what's happening, isn't it? It's like relativizing, or … de-dramatizing.

That was your idea?
No, the laughs were. He always said, "you smile, because you like him." He was sensitive to nuances … knew where to place the stress, and the consequences of doing so.

So, not only the smiles but also the laughter. Because, at times, you laugh at him.
I don't remember. I couldn't tell you where I begin or where Buñuel begins or ends. He made you see from his point of view what these characters were like. If he saw that you weren't getting it, he would explain things to you. So, within this elementary or apparently simple framework, there was always his perception of that simple reality that he was excavating. Like the earth with its many layers.

Let's move on to another scene. You are here in Conchita's flat in Paris with your mother and with El Morenito. One of the enigmas of the film is whether or not he is your lover.
No, I don't think so.

But at the end you make love to him.
No, I am just teasing.

Just teasing? And is that how Buñuel explained your relationship with him?
Buñuel never mentioned I had a lover. I was teasing my lover. I wanted to hurt people. This woman (Conchita) is a little ignorant. Or natural.

In these scenes Buñuel sometimes shoots through mirrors. Did he explain his reasons for placing the camera in certain positions?
Yes, technically he explained everything very clearly, it's a little theatrical.

On your relationship with Mathieu, did you consider why a young girl like her is attracted to an older man?
I think she is playing. She is not in love with him, but she is attracted to him because she is looking for a better life.

She says she is a mocita, *a virgin.*
She is. She is definitely a virgin. She's fooling around because she's still not a woman. Look at her mother: how could she not be a virgin? (Laughs)

Very religious … So Buñuel never said that El Morenito was your real lover?
He never said, "this is your real lover," or "you are involved with this man." They were just friends, he belonged to my world, my life. He didn't have to explain everything. It was my life. And I might or might not have made love to him. I say I didn't, but possibly …

Who knows?
Who knows?

The scenarist was Carrière. Did you have much contact with him? Did you meet to discuss the screenplay?
Everything was very friendly. They knew we were very young and we got on very well; they told us everything, and we were all creating something together. But there was no routine, just the reverse, total generosity and fun.

Was the house bought for Conchita in Seville real?
Yes.

How long were you there?
Only a few days.

Conchita is a little schizophrenic.
But you cannot analyze her. That's how she is at the moment, because she's ignorant, and hasn't yet found the love of her life, and she's looking for him, and she's deceiving herself, and going along with someone who gives her what she wants, but at the same time it's all a lie, built on a dream. Don't you agree? Because she wouldn't be any happier with El Morenito.

What kind of a relationship did you have with the actor who played El Morenito?
None. He turned up, did what he had to do and that was it. We were nice towards each other and shared our scenes in a very friendly way, but not like my friendship with Carole. We didn't have much time. We had two or three days together.

I'd like to concentrate on one of the most shocking scenes in the film, where you are hit by Mathieu.
Oh yes. You know, when we shot that scene Buñuel was in tears by the end. He was very emotional and said to me: "it has reminded me of something I saw in my own life." That's why I said earlier that Buñuel was the best audience. He was terrific, and that made you want to perform all the more for him.

Domestic violence is very much in the news nowadays. Was it something that concerned you then?
Well, I came from a very artistic family… my father was totally liberal … and with principles I admired tremendously. So, at home, people spoke plainly, and a spade was called a spade. But at the same time these terrible things were distanced from me, and didn't really influence the preparation of my roles, although I am someone who always seeks after the truth … But at that particular time and on that particular role I didn't intellectualize anything very much, because it was not part of the role. It would have been wrong to do so. I allowed myself to think and feel that I was that woman. Also, as ever since childhood I have lived alongside a lot of people. At home so many people came and told their stories. We were as children very close to so many people, and we were able as a result to observe at close range the pain of others, their happiness and their vitality. So, no role was alien to me …

Was Mathieu's violence a surprise to you?
I wasn't expecting it. I didn't realize I was playing with fire. The role was of a terribly egoistical person, who knew she fascinated him. Perhaps her provocation was uncontrollable … she was looking for herself, going as far as possible to release the volcano inside her …

Are there any other comments you'd like to make about the film?
I have an abundance of memories from the shooting of the film. Don Luis's shoots are completely surrealistic. Really surrealistic. Ordinary incidents turned into amusing situations. For example, one day we were about to shoot in the park, and it was very early morning, we were all prepared and an electrician got out of the lorry carrying a sack, and Don Luis said, "… Let's see, Fernando, put it on your shoulder, let's see what it looks like. Move around a bit. That's great, that's great." And he looked like a happy child. Then I asked him: "But why? But why?" And he looked at me and said: " Because … *tatachán tatachán*. Why inspiration? Why art? Why? Why? Well, because … that's life. One has to enjoy it in a way that's different from the way one wants it to be."

And he never divulged the contents of the sack?
… I think it's memories.

Because at one point, the butler says, when asked by Mathieu his opinion of women, "I have a friend who thinks all women are sacks of excrement."
Ha ha ha (laughs loudly).

"It's my friend's opinion," not mine, he says.
It's probably all the excrement we carry around with us! If there's no excrement there's no future (laughs). I remember too there was a scene where Fernando had to act very fragile and vulnerable. It's the one where I'm wearing the black dressing gown, when I sit on his lap … Fernando … is so self-composed … He found it difficult to be fragile. Don Luis said to me, "Before I say 'action!'" – because he loved joking around with me, and was very fond of me, and would often say to me, "Molina, I love you" – "you whisper in his ear that his feet smell." And I replied, "Don Luis, how embarrassing! How can I possibly say that to him?" And I burst out laughing. "I simply can't!" He called out "Action!," and I said to Fernando: "Fernando, your feet really smell, your feet smell." And he went red. "Action!," and the work was done and it was fantastic. And then we cut. And Fernando saw us laughing and realized that this had been a shitty joke of ours. We were always combining seriousness with childish behavior. In the interests of getting it right, and it worked. I think Buñuel is the person, or the filmmaker, who has connected most with my life, with my world, with my work.

Notes

1 An earlier version, *The Devil Is a Woman* (1935), was directed by Josef von Sternberg.
2 In many medieval and Renaissance paintings, by Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, and others, St John the Baptist appears with a straightened finger that seems to be pointing toward another world.
3 I am indebted, as ever, to Javier Herrera and to Margarita Lobo of the Filmoteca Nacional in Madrid, who made available to me indispensable material in preparation for the writing of this chapter.

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25

Buñuel and Historical Reason

Cristina Moreiras-Menor

> *Ours is a present that is hurtled into the future without regard for human attachments, needs, or capacities. A present that dishonors the past by erasing it with unprecedented speed and indifference. A present that equates the recent past with the anachronistic, with insufficient* techne *to survive. A present in which a knowledgeable politician is a policy wonk rather than a reader of political histories. A present whose inevitable and rapid eclipse is uppermost in the political consciousness of its inhabitants. How can such a present be loved – and if it cannot be, what are our investments in addressing its ills?*
>
> (Wendy Brown, 2001)

When we speak about history or historicity, are we speaking strictly about the past, about a mark printed upon an event that has departed?[1] Or can we, should we, include in this reference other temporalities such as the present, or the future as Wendy Brown, following Benjamin and Derrida, suggests in her *Politics Out of History* (2001)? Is linear, chronological time what is at stake when a film or a novel presents, through the development of its narrative and its use of aesthetic techniques, a reflection on historicity or historical temporality? Luis Buñuel does not appear to present coherent narratives, structured around conventional historical time, around the historical event itself. Nor does he appear to organize in his later films, in any systematic way, an *historical* awareness, an awareness of recent history. Nevertheless, I would like to propose that his films, especially the later films, appear to address ideologically and politically the convergence of multiple temporalities, including that "present … hurtled into the future" (Brown, 2001: 142), at a very particular moment: that of narration and image in such a way that conventionally conceived historical time (the past) becomes disordered, a-chronological, and impossible to measure. In Buñuel's films the past is reconstructed as *the* time of history in order to make way for the present and the future

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as moments that are intrinsically historical, given their mutual relationship. In this way, and this is the objective that frames this chapter, I would like to propose that Buñuel offers a critical and highly political reflection on temporality, privileging in his meditation the present as the historical moment par excellence. It is a present, however, that has been absolutely contaminated, although always in an hospitable way, by the intimate presence of the past and the future. The past and the future become part of a *history of the present* to the degree that it is in this moment that Benjamin's "constellation of awakening" is recognized, allowing for the emergence of the "awakening of a non-yet-conscious knowledge of what has been," becoming thus the "space of history" (Benjamin, 1999: 458).[2] The historical, or historicity, becomes then an experience of the present insofar as it is the moment of historical recognition. Within this structure the past is reunited with its affective valence and turns into an intrinsic part of the personal and collective *present experience*.

In this chapter I can provide only a brief gloss of how this temporalization of the present as historical moment is achieved in Buñuel's work. In order to do so I will focus on the director's three final films: *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* (The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie, 1972, *Le Fantôme de la liberté* (The Phantom of Liberty, 1974), and *Cet obscur object du désir* (That Obscure Object of Desire, 1977). In the words of the director himself:

> The thinking that guides me to this day, at the age of seventy-five, is the same thinking that guided me at the age of twenty-seven. The idea comes from Engels: the artist describes authentic social relations with the purpose of destroying the conventionally held ideas about those relations, as a way of placing the optimism of the bourgeois world in crisis and of forcing the audience to doubt the continuity of the established order. (Cited in Sánchez Vidal, 1982: 63)

Critics and scholars of Buñuel's work have affirmed on numerous occasions the triptych nature of the films *La Voie lactée* (The Milky Way, 1969), *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie*, and *Le Fantôme de la liberté*, in which the filmmaker "recapitulates a good part of his career, returning to a surrealism that is now very different from the militant frenzy of his early work" (Sánchez Vidal, 1982: 62).[3] Without wishing to question this affirmation, I would like to propose another trilogy, this time made up of *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie*, *Le Fantôme de la liberté*, and his last picture, *Cet obscur object du désir*.

Incorporating a Surrealism that is less volatile than that of Buñuel's early work, these films share narrative structures built on displacement (such us the paths taken by their characters, the transformative nature of their stories, and the retelling of stories that have apparently ended), that link the films' aesthetic desire to their political intention. By taking into account this structure, the three films arrive at a sense of community (in that they are part of the same story) through the articulation of a powerful and critical examination of social reality which Buñuel then uses to question the values that guide and govern the history of Western

bourgeois modernity. From this perspective we can conjecture that while each film functions as an autonomous narrative, bringing them together as a critical constellation allows us to examine the specificity of Buñuel's critique of modernity's concept of time. This is particularly the case in relation to the bourgeoisie/middle class concept and historicization of time.

Indeed, in *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* this theme takes shape by staging the altercations that six members of the French upper bourgeoisie/middle class experience while trying to satisfy their burning desire to consume good food; in *Le Fantôme de la liberté* the theme is accompanied by a series of vignettes, more or less related to each other, in which different social and historical situations are presented, almost all of them directly related to that same bourgeoisie which is grouped, as is often the case in Buñuel, with the Church and the political powers of the state; finally, *Cet obscur object du désir* focuses on the tale of a member of the upper-middle class and his insatiable desire for a young woman. At the intersection of these three films, which are all marked by the technique of displacement, we are faced with a narrative that is wholly constituted around what I would describe as the historicity of the aesthetic or, in other words, the way in which the Buñuelian aesthetic becomes a politics of temporality and a reflection on historical reason.[4]

With this in mind, how can we arrive at a notion of historicity and a sense of temporality in Luis Buñuel's later films in which there is, after all, an important tendency toward repetition (thematic and structural) in their storylines? Perhaps we can use two of these repetitions as a means of gaining insight into the late Buñuel's critical-political thought. We can highlight, on the one hand, the figure of the phantom, on the other, the ubiquitous presence of terrorist violence, which is always there, in silence and at the margins, in the last three films.

We see how the phantom materializes in diverse ways and by means of different strategies: as a *character*, in its moment of apparition, as is the case in *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* where the dreams of several characters are filled with the resurrected dead looking to settle old scores, or themselves become the object of revenge after having died; as *desire*, as seen in the game of duplicities, illusions, and repetitions in *Cet obscur object du désir*, where the female character who is both one and two characters simultaneously, together with that permanent dissatisfaction that signals, inevitably, the time of the deferred promise; or, finally, as an homage to a tradition of political and philosophical thought as in the case of *Le Fantôme de la liberté*, where even the title indicates a possible storyline in its direct allusion to Marx's famous sentence, "A specter is haunting Europe."[5]

The shadow of terrorist violence hangs in the background of the three films, as a presence not unlike the spectral nature of the stories that contain it. One can feel it, smell it, expect it, for it accompanies the actions and the movements of the characters or the situations as they unfold. But it only ever exists as an indication (as a sound, a trace, a murmur) rather than as a total presence or an integral part

of the story.[6] The "trace" of violence moves about insidiously through Buñuel's films and it is in this sense that Víctor Fuentes indicates:

> *Le Fantôme de la liberté* opens with the flash of gunpowder insinuated in the painting "Los fusilamientos de la Moncloa," perhaps the most striking artistic expression of the "horrors of war" of all time. … In *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* and in *Cet obscur object du désir* the violence of repression and terrorism makes itself visible in the fabric of daily life, tearing it. (Fuentes, 1989:172; emphasis in original)

Ghosts and violence (thus entities and action) lend these three films a structure of historicity that forges the parts and entirety in their commonality. Violence transports the audience to multiple and simultaneous temporalities, to a place beyond reality in which the unconscious has a way of leaving its imprint with faint but indelible strokes. This multiplicity of temporalities existing simultaneously (the time Derrida described as "out of joint"), and this unconscious reality that coexists with the apparent reality of the narrative, act as a point of entry into a temporal form that constitutes the guiding element in the films, an element whose essential condition is a kind of time that by its very nature is a "non-contemporaneity with itself of the living present" (Derrida, 1994: 13), and whose specificity creates an opening for the residual, moving undecidedly in the interstices between life and death, in that place where the future arrives in advance and cries out for, as Derrida demonstrates, a politics of memory.

The opening up of this non-contemporaneity with itself that aims toward and makes space for the non-presence of the phantom and of violence brings us closer to a Buñuel that is reflecting on his own time period and his own contemporary reality, both of which are comprehended as parts of a historical reason that modernity does not categorize as historical. This gesture of historicizing the present as historical time puts into question the certainties upon which the truths and values of the bourgeois are constructed, mainly that the past is the place of the historical event and narrative reality is the place of a finite and unequivocal temporality. On the contrary, violence and the phantom allow the residual to enter obliquely, as that which disturbs the essential certainties upon which the bourgeois notions of historical truth are grounded. Much like violence in Buñuel's work, the phantom is that which cuts time lose, unleashing a narrative whose historical reason gives way to "a [spectral] moment that no longer belongs to time" (Derrida, 1994: 14); it distorts and breaks time free from the present and the past. This new temporal order or this new historical reason, which is radically *other* to the historical reason of modernity, "instead of handing out correct answers" as Laura Martins affirms, "formulates problems [in order] to impede a dogmatic "image" of thought" (Martins, 1999: 193). It therefore destabilizes the truth of historical time upon which the truth of reality is created.

In addition to these phantasmal figures (characters, situations, etc.), Buñuel conjures up four special "phantoms" whose singularity and invisibility haunt his three final productions. I am referring to Marx, Freud, Lacan, and the group

of surrealist "characters" that pile up in his scenes not only as a way of paying homage but also as a means of making Psychoanalysis, Marxism, and Surrealism intrinsic elements of his reflection on reality, time, and history.

If our point of departure is that Luis Buñuel's last three films can be organized as a triptych (wherein each part contains only a partial signification in relation to the whole), we can venture that Buñuel's historical reason, his politics of temporality, is implicitly tied to these four "phantom" discourses that make their way into his films, both as an aesthetic (in terms of techniques of image and narration) and as a politics from which the director constructs his fictitious worlds. Marxism contributes to the idea that reality is dominated by a perverse and corrupt social class characterized by the tyranny of middle-class conventions; Psychoanalysis allows Buñuel to present reality to be the visible side of an *other*, deeper reality, which is no less significant and "real," grounded in the unconscious, in which the fundamental truth of the subject is contained; finally, Surrealism provides the possibility of breaking, questioning, ironizing, and shattering the story's own conventions, thereby allowing the film to open up like a Pandora's box from which anything can arise given that the universal concepts of truth, justice, liberty, love, to name just a few, collapse through maddening coexistence with their opposites.

Thus Marxism, Psychoanalysis, and Surrealism clear the way for analyzing those perverse structures and inscriptions that sustain modernity's historical reality. First, the bourgeois modern history's *owner*) is represented as a protagonist in *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie*, as present in the majority of the vignettes in *Le Fantôme de la liberté*, and, last of all, as embodied by the main character in *Cet obscur object du désir*. Second is the concept of story or narration according to which everything has an end and a resolution. Buñuel stages the impossibility of offering a solution at the end of his stories; that is to say, he presents subjects and situations that appear to be by their very essence or condition in a permanent and fruitless state of searching, always unfinished, beyond the life–death paradigm of reality and beyond modernity's chronology of past–present–future. This tendency is apparent, in the most clear-cut case, in *Le Fantôme de la liberté* but it is not entirely absent in the other two films, in which, to provide an example, no one ever finishes a lunch or dinner (*Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie*), or where desire is eternally frustrated (*Cet obscur object du désir*).[7] Third is the utter solitude of the subject in the face of desire always unattainable, always in a state of becoming but always pending. This is the central theme of *Cet obscur object du désir* but it also takes shape forcefully in *Le Fantôme de la liberté* and in *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* via the constant interruptions of dinners in the latter and as a theme in some of the stories in the former, for example, in the case of the nephew obsessed by his aunt's body.

In Buñuel's final triptych society (the bourgeoisie), narrative structure (open, always indicating the absence of conclusion and closure), and the subject (as the instantiation of lack) are conjoined by the common presence of the phantom and the violence unfolding at the margins, taking the shape of a non-presence.

The figure of the phantom in these three last films marks an obsessive repetition (let us not forget that the phantom *is* essentially in its *re*-appearance / apparition) of

the motives, themes, scenes, and symbols that appear repeatedly, from *Un chien andalou* (An Andalusian Dog, 1929) to *Cet obscur object du désir*, which lead us to think that, in all reality, his films are dealing with similar issues and with a certain signifying unity throughout.[8] Repetition and phantom point to an experience of temporality that highlights discontinuity and a trembling instability in the historical rendering of meaning. The presence of the phantom and the awareness that something is repeating itself incessantly stages the bewilderment of the question: Where is this thing coming from that already arrived, that was already here?

Time, history, world: the time of the phantom/ghost, the time that constitutes itself with the arrival of the phantom, the time of *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* and *Le Fantôme de la liberté* that simultaneously is *the* opening up to a history that has come undone, that, in its own reality, in its narrative, and in its subject, spans and contains (in its residues and remnants) a constellation of temporalities.[9] There, the subjects of the narration (the main characters of the film), the narration itself (the characters walking in the middle of nowhere), navigate without direction or certainty (this repeated segment doesn't relate to any part of the film), through remote pasts, through ominous presents, and through an already anticipated to-come (the segment is without marks of temporality) which emphasizes, in its zigzag trajectory, that contemporaneous time becomes dislocated due to its own radical non-contemporaneity with itself. Without a doubt, a brilliant image of this temporality of the phantom, of this non-contemporaneity with itself of a present that accumulates a multiplicity of temporalities under a simultaneous presence, is the one we see in those bizarre interludes of *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie*, those abrupt, unexpected, uncertain, and illogical interruptions when the six members of the bourgeoisie walk along a road in the middle of nowhere, at no particular time, without any direction: a world, a present, a history without certainties, without marks of identity.

Buñuel appears to be asking himself by means of the aesthetic of repetition and the phantom a question Derrida would propose years later in his *Specters of Marx*: "What is the time and what is the history of a specter? Is there a present of the specter? Are its comings and goings ordered according to the linear succession of a before and an after, between a present-past, a present-present, and a present-future, between a 'real time' and a deferred time?" (Derrida, 1994: 52). By preceding this line of questioning Buñuel asks us to revise the notion of history that we use to understand the temporal order of experience, that "reassuring order of the present and, especially, border between the present, the actual or present reality of the present, and everything that can be opposed to it: absence, non-presence, non-effectivity, inactuality, virtuality, or even the simulacrum in general, and so forth" (Derrida, 1994: 53). In his questioning Buñuel articulates a radical criticism of the world and the discourses that constitute historical reason.

Buñuel closes his career in film with a scene of extreme violence that replicates via the use of a curious circular gesture another scene from *Un chien Andalou*. I am referring to the scene in which a woman is sewing white clothes behind a shop

window while Mathieu contemplates her lasciviously from the street; at which point a bomb goes off, the screen blackens, and for the first time in Buñuel's work the end is presented in the form of the word (FIN). Sánchez Vidal reminds us that:

> The woman sewing reminds us of the Vermeer painting *The Lacemaker*, a work that is presented in *Un chien andalou* when the protagonist throws aside the book she is reading. But, above all, this final sequence of Buñuel's last film returns [the viewer] to the initial scene of the first film, suturing that programmatic sectioning of the eye that opened a trajectory presided by desire and its areas of shadows. (Sánchez Vidal, 1982: 383)

This final scene, then, is the first time we witness a closure, a closed ending of time and history. In *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* the end came about as the protagonists walked in no particular direction on that road in the middle of nowhere, while *Le Fantôme de la liberté* ended with the episode at the zoo where there was no resolution of scene nor film. Terrorist violence puts a full stop, however, not only to Conchita's and Mathieu's story, but to the entirety of Buñuel's filmography. This ending marked by closure materializes the presence of terrorism that up to now had been phantasmal, converting it, like the image of the woman sewing indicates, into the suture that the director uses to "close" history. The suture, finally, becomes possible in the spectator's gaze and this gaze becomes the instance at which the promise of awakening to a new reality arises, a reality which is a "dialectical point of rupture," as Benjamin would say, from which historical knowledge (the understanding of history) will arise: "Historical 'understanding' is to be grasped, in principle, as an afterlife of that which is understood; and what has been recognized in the analysis of the 'afterlife works,' in the analysis of 'fame,' is therefore to be considered the foundation of history in general" (Benjamin, 1999: 460).

Perhaps what Buñuel leaves in our eyes is precisely the promise of a newness capable of entertaining the possibility of a historical moment that is *other*, a moment that becomes possible with the destruction of that hegemonic historical reason, empty and linear, now open, finally, to a truly historical understanding of reality.

Notes

1 This essay is an edited version of the first chapter of my book *La estela del tiempo: Imagen e historicidad en el cine español contemporáneo*, published in 2011 by Iberoamericana/Vervuert. I am grateful to David Collinge for his translation of this essay.

2 This essay would not have been possible without the work of Walter Benjamin, especially as regards his philosophy of history. I will repeatedly reference his book *The Arcades Project*, particularly the section titled "On the Theory of Knowledge, Theory of Progress," as well as the "Theses on the Philosophy of History."

3 This idea is shared by several other critics, of which Víctor Fuentes and Marsha Kinder are notable examples. Similarly, and in a retrospective fashion, Buñuel himself affirms in his *Mi ultimo suspiro* the medieval triptych character of these three films (Buñuel, 1982: 242).
4 This technique would refer to the shift of attention from a specific problematic narrative point to another in order to focus in a less conflictive one. For a brief but good introduction to the technique of displacement in film, see *Engaging Cinema: An Introduction to Film Studies* by Bill Nichols (2010).
5 The director himself says this much in his memoires, *Mi último suspiro* (1982: 242).
6 Here I am speaking figuratively about the background scenes in the streets, for example, while the characters are doing something else, when the spectator sees the explosion of a bomb. These scenes do not belong to the main narrative, but they are there, in the background, accompanying the main characters. So there is no particular technique employed except that of showing what is going on behind the main scene.
7 Interestingly enough, in *Le Fantôme de la liberté* only one of the stories is brought to conclusion: the story of the poet-killer who, from a building balcony executes people in the street below. This story is the only moment in the three movies in which the issue of terrorism is overtly thematized or narrativized.
8 To examine this topic in greater depth the reader should consider the works on Buñuel by Evans (1995), Fuentes (1989, 2005), Kinder (1975), Sánchez Vidal (1982, 1991, 1993) and Williams (1981), to name just a few.
9 For a consideration of history as a "constellation," see the work of Walter Benjamin, especially *The Arcades Project* (Benjamin, 1999).

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26

Through a Fractal Lens

New Perspectives on the Narratives of Luis Buñuel

Wendy Everett

> *Chance governs all things; necessity, which is far from having the same purity, comes only later.*
>
> (Buñuel, 1985: 171)

The narrative structures of both the early and late films of Luis Buñuel are predominantly governed by chance and the unexpected. This does not mean that they themselves are randomly composed, far from it; indeed, minute, detailed planning, or *découpage*, is one of the hallmarks of Buñuel's technique, but it is the way in which their multiple stories intersect and fragment, deliberately creating ambiguity, unpredictability, and multiplicity, repeatedly wrong-footing the spectator and demanding fresh interpretative strategies that is one of the reasons why the films remain as compellingly innovative today as when they were first released. Ironically, it is the impossibility of limiting Buñuel's films to a single interpretation that appears to provoke the perverse desire to do just that: to label, define, "solve" their elusive complexities. In the totalizing interpretations that have so often dominated the critical landscapes surrounding his work, the films appear to function as cryptic crossword puzzles, offering a series of obscure "clues" which presuppose a single accurate solution. The contradictory nature of the allegorical and selective readings which have resulted now form a popular mythology in which, time after time, the films themselves are reduced to straightforward symbols in order to justify a conventional, linear reading.[1] Even within the more open-ended approach that marks contemporary analysis, the desire to "solve" or to impose coherence can still be found, as the films continue to invite and reject interpretation in equal measure. However, it is the way in which the construction of these multiple, disruptive, and discordant narratives inevitably resists coherent

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solutions that is the concern of this chapter in which Buñuel's films are viewed through the fractal lens of the postmodern.

Traditionally, Buñuel's films, particularly his "French" films, have been situated within the context of Modernism, alongside Surrealism, with which they are closely affiliated, and cinema itself, almost universally considered to have been "born modern" (Gay, 2007: 358). There are, of course, a few exceptions to this view, including the suggestion by Víctor Fuentes (1999) that *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* (The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie, 1972) is a film which spans both the modern and the postmodern.[2] Nevertheless, attempts to re-site Buñuel's *oeuvre* in this way remain rare, not least, perhaps, because of the notorious slipperiness of the term "postmodern," particularly in its application to cinema, where attempts to define it, or to date the end of Modernism and the start of Postmodernism, are generally unhelpful since critics and theorists rarely agree. (For a taste of this lively debate see, for example: Huyssen, 1986; Mitchell, 1993; Compagnon, 1994; Hayward, 1996.) In any case, as the historian G.M. Trevelyan famously pointed out, unlike facts, periods are "retrospective conceptions that we form about past events, useful to focus discussion, but very often leading historical thought astray" (1944: 92). Better then to understand modernism and postmodernism not in binary opposition but as a process of transformation in which one can observe gradual, overlapping shifts from modernist concerns with progress and causality to, for example, the "disorder, chaos, chance, discontinuity, indeterminancy, and forces of random or aleatory play" which, for Best and Kellner at least, characterize the postmodern (1997: 136). Moreover, it is essential to remember that while plurality, fragmentation, and ambiguity are widely seen to characterize the postmodern, modernity too is essentially "diffuse and multifaceted" (Boggs and Pollard, 2003: vii). Even the reflexivity, irony, pastiche, and quotation commonly ascribed to postmodernism are rooted in what Orr sees as "the self-transforming nature of the modern" (1993: 1–2).

Summing up the subversive and experimental form that characterized postmodern films, Boggs and Pollard insist that they share an "irreverence for authority and convention – a rebellious spirit, dystopic views of the future, cynical attitudes towards family and romance, images of alienated sexuality, … and perhaps above all, the sense of a world filled with chaos" (2003: ix). This definition, like those noted in the previous paragraph, is strikingly relevant to Buñuel's work. It is, therefore, within this broader context that this chapter will focus on one aspect of postmodern cinema: a new narrative form which is structured as a series of multiple, open-ended stories, randomly intersecting in non-hierarchical, multi-temporal spaces that privilege chance and suggest the existence of parallel realities. In an earlier article exploring the nature and significance of this new cinematic form (2005), I used the term "fractal" to refer to the growing corpus of such films, and I examined, in particular, their relationship with the scientific and cultural insecurities of postmodernity.[3] Given that Buñuel's films reject linear narrative in favor of complexity and ambiguity, and since so many of the above criteria seem particularly

pertinent to them, the idea of considering them through a fractal lens is potentially rewarding, not least because at issue is their very ability to resist definition and interpretation. My objective, therefore, is to explore some of the consequences of considering Buñuel's films as fractal narratives, and to assess the significance of any new insights that might result.

Although almost all of Buñuel's films can usefully be considered in this way, for the purpose of this chapter I shall concentrate primarily on a single example, hoping that this case study will serve as a template for rethinking Buñuel's *oeuvre* as a whole: *Le Fantôme de la liberté* (The Phantom of Liberty, 1974). This is his penultimate work, the middle film of the final trilogy which also includes *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* and *Cet obscur objet du désir* (That Obscure Object of Desire, 1977). These three films – along with others such as *La Voie lactée* (The Milky Way, 1969) – not only share radically innovative narrative structures, but are also linked by dense intertextuality and reference. However, I am intrigued by *Le Fantôme de la liberté*, which seems perhaps the most daringly experimental of all, as well as being one of the most playful and humorous. My primary concern is with its filmic language and narrative structures, and my objective is not to establish new meanings, but to explore through its structures the very mechanisms which ensure that, like so many of Buñuel's films, it remains entirely open-ended, and thus perpetually fresh and challenging.

Fractal Films

My adoption of the term "fractal" to describe this new narrative form directly references recent scientific theories which, rejecting both the deterministic view of a predictable universe and the long-held belief in the principles of Euclidean geometry, posit a chaotic, fractal universe, governed by chance and uncertainty. These ideas, which became increasingly familiar to the general public in the closing decades of the twentieth century, largely originated in experiments carried out in the 1960s by the meteorologist Edward Lorenz – in particular, his identification of the "butterfly effect," which argues that the tiniest chance event (the flapping of a butterfly's wings on the other side of the world) may yield major, random, and unpredictable consequences. As the mathematical study of chance and chaos, fractal geometry not only provides a new way of measuring the world, but actually makes visible the "irregular, interrupted, or jagged" patterns of chaos (Calabrese, 1987: 122). A striking feature of such patterns is that, although irregular and fragmented, they are also dynamic and scalar, that is to say, marked, at any scale, by mobile, rhythmic patterns of repetition and variation, whose complexities are revealed, for example, in the ever finer recursive detail of the Mandelbrot set.

Given that we inhabit a fractal universe, it is clear that its characteristic patterns are likely to be replicated in multiple other, equally dynamic universes which, like

ours, are in constant flux. Recent developments in quantum physics support this idea, arguing that, as a result, reality itself must be recognized as multiple. Flanks (2003), for example, explaining the processes whereby multiple and dynamic universes are constantly being formed and re-formed, repeatedly highlights the consequence: there can be no such thing as objective reality, only multiple, unstable, individual realities.

Among the growing body of films to engage openly with such ideas can be found *71 Fragmente Einer Chronologie Des Zufalls* (71 Fragments of a Chronology of Chance, 1994), *El efecto mariposa* (The Butterfly Effect, 1995), and *Böse Zellen* (Free Radicals, 2003). From such examples we can identify a clear narrative pattern including randomly generated events with unpredictable consequences. Structured as a complex and unstable network of apparently unconnected happenings and characters, none of the intersecting stories that results is privileged in any way. Thus, multiple equivalent realities are created, while the film offers neither explanation nor closure; the narrative is conceived as a dynamic and open-ended process with which the spectator must creatively engage. To these key characteristics must be added, as we explore the work of Buñuel from this perspective, the notion of an irregular, interrupted, or jagged filmic form, and the characteristic repetitions and variations that shape the fractal.

Whilst a good many of Buñuel's films demonstrate the characteristics of fractal postmodern cinema, it is *Le Fantôme de la liberté* that is perhaps the most rewarding to consider in this light. On the Studio/Canal DVD cover, the film is described as "fired" by the critical and commercial success of *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie*, but "a far less easy pill to swallow," suggesting that although, at the time of its release, the film attracted wide audiences and mixed reviews, its complex narrative structure was perceived as particularly confusing. Somewhat surprisingly, this reputation seems to have endured (for example, Wood, 2000), and, despite the film's rich comedy and entertaining, playful satire, it has tended to receive less scholarly attention than Buñuel's other late films. For instance, only two short references are made to *Le Fantôme de la liberté* in Gwynne Edwards's *A Companion to Buñuel* (2005), against 26 references to *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie*; Peter William Evan's 1995 study, *The Films of Luis Buñuel: Subjectivity and Desire*, devotes a whole chapter to *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie,* but makes only a dozen or so references to *Le Fantôme de la liberté,* and barely two pages are given over to it in Harper and Stone's *The Unsilvered Screen: Surrealism on Film* (2007). It is true that Joan Mellen's 1978 collection of essays on Buñuel has a whole chapter on this film, which has also been the subject of a number of journal articles and reviews, but this still contrasts with the several monographs devoted to Buñuel's other works. It seems likely that the film's complex (fractal) narrative structure accounts, at least in part, for both its reputation as "difficult" and the relative paucity of critical material devoted to it. Moreover, the attempt by critics to impose a coherent single reading is dominant. This is particularly the case in early accounts, such as Mellen (1978), and Suleiman (1978). For Susan Suleiman, for example, the narrative is basically

linear and composed of sequences which are essentially coherent and whose failure to produce a complete story is a deliberate replication of schizophrenic thought patterns (1978), while Carlos Clarens (1974/5) argues that the film's narrative vagaries constitute an exploration of the concept of death. Typically, moments where the film confronts us with impossible, contradictory images (simultaneous absence and presence, life and death) are explained away in the interest of a coherent overall interpretation, an approach which still exists, despite an increasing awareness of the particular significance of the film's narrative complexities. For example, writing in *Sight and Sound*, a quarter of a century after its release, Michael Wood describes *Le Fantôme de la liberté* as "the film in which Buñuel took the *wreckage of convention* to its furthest limits" (2000: 31, emphasis added). It is somewhat surprising that the innovative complexity acknowledged here has not been widely explored in terms of postmodernity, although the film fits most comfortably into this model.[4]

Buñuel himself points us in that direction in his autobiography, *My Last Breath*, in which he acknowledges that he has a "soft spot" for this film precisely because it explores the theme that "chance governs all things" (1985: 171). In other words, here, as in all fractal films, chance forms the structuring principle. In a passage that reads like a textbook analysis of chaos or fractal narratives, Buñuel explains his ideas: the film should start with a single banal event or accident, which provokes an "infinite series of questions." Any answers we think we identify, he insists, merely provoke further questions, so that we repeatedly "find ourselves at complicated crossroads which lead to other crossroads, to even more fantastic labyrinths" (1985: 171). Just like the multiple characters in the film, the spectators are constantly obliged to decide which narrative path to follow, and their choice too is based upon what they consider a process of logical deduction. However, since the "causes" of the events are "no more than accidents," and – as the film repeatedly reminds us – traditional logic no longer holds in a chaotic universe, any attempts to follow a linear path or to develop a coherent interpretation are doomed (1985: 171–172). Essentially, it is the actual structure of the film that renders any such attempts pointless. While the significance of this idea will be developed more fully later, it is interesting, in passing, to note the close relationship between Buñuel's comments on chance and the impossibility of answers, and those made by other directors whose position within the postmodern category is universally accepted. Thus, in an interview with Scott Foundas, published in 2001, the Austrian director Michael Haneke insists that art *cannot* provide answers, but can only ask questions: "the only thing you can do is to put questions strongly. … If you give the answer, you lie. Whatever kind of security you try to feed somebody is an illusion. … I think every art form today can only put out questions, not answers. It's the fundamental condition" (Foundas, 2001). The idea that providing answers is a dishonest way of pacifying an audience recalls Buñuel's 1953 lecture "Poetry and Cinema," in which he describes as "bromides" those films which, in setting out to satisfy their spectators by providing answers, in fact rob them of their critical

freedom (reproduced in Mellen, 1978: 105–110). In similar vein, Tom Tykwer's *Lola rennt* (Run Lola Run, 1999) opens with a voice-over describing the human condition itself as "countless questions in search of an answer. An answer that will give rise to the next question, and so on, and so on." In other words, there can be no certainty in an unstable, chaotic, and fragmented universe, and Buñuel's films, like those of other postmodern directors, engage directly with such ideas.

Given Buñuel's belief in chance, and his desire to create film in the interrogative mode, it is hardly surprising that the uncertainty principle governs the structure of *Le Fantôme de la liberté*. The film is composed of a number of distinct but overlapping episodes (one of which is embedded within another, in a move which recalls the complex embedded dream sequences of *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie*), each of which is densely packed with proliferating subplots and events. I distinguish eight main episodes (nine, if the brief final sequence in the zoo is accorded independent status). Of course, the total is fluid, even arbitrary; the episodes might easily be divided quite differently, given both the number of subplots within each, and the complex scalar "repetition-variations" that occur. Here, I am borrowing the useful term coined by Deleuze in his discussion of the way in which Buñuel's late films abandon the cyclical structures of his earlier, naturalist work, to create a "pluralist cosmology." This is achieved, he argues, through the structuring patterns of repetition and variations, whose contradictory, simultaneous realities free narrative time from linear chronology (1989: 99). Given neither cause nor context, each new story is triggered by a chance encounter and, in each, we meet proliferating new groups or networks.[5] There is, thus, constant flux but no linear progression, no sense of temporal or narrative development, just spiraling complex, dynamic, and interconnected patterns: labyrinth, rhizome, or fractal.

Techniques

While Buñuel's films offer powerful explorations of chance and uncertainty, and seamlessly interweave reality and dream, consciousness and the unconscious, and conflicting, disconnected times and spaces, he is not a director who relies upon special effects or technical gymnastics. His style is generally realist, his camera rarely obtrusive, and his radically complex films have a paradoxical reputation for technical simplicity, for being "straightforward and without the least affectation" (Carrière, 1978: 92). Whilst his *mise en scène* offers the spectator cluttered landscapes composed of a heteroclite collection of "random" objects (whose illogical juxtapositions recall the fundamental principles of Surrealism), a considerable part of the films' power to disturb and disorientate originates in the moments of transition, whether from one scene to the next or between various narrative episodes. Such moments constitute Buñuel's narrative "crossroads": open-ended instants in which anything may happen, any direction may be followed.[6]

In filmic terms, what we are talking about here is, of course, montage or editing: the act of joining together two discrete fragments of film in order to create something entirely new. In the classical paradigm, such transitions are invisible; they are dictated and constrained by the need for narrative logic, and if some potentially confusing movement through space or time is necessary, conventional markers (wipes, fades, dissolves) are used to ease the transition and ground the spectator. Buñuel's crossroad moments, however, draw attention to themselves; they are manifestations of chance which destabilize the narrative and are openly disruptive, challenging, and confusing.

Obviously, Surrealism foregrounded such moments, the chance encounters of clashing images serving to create the spark which is the source of the *merveilleux*, that moment at which the rational mind is confused, and the unconscious liberated. In postmodern cinema too, editing functions to shock and disturb, to subvert linearity, and foreground the materiality and artifice of narrative. Thus, postmodernism also celebrates the illusory, the bizarre, and the baroque – primarily, claim Boggs and Pollard, as a way of highlighting the "social relations of anxiety, despair, paranoia and chaos" in the modern world (2003: 211). While Buñuel's editing techniques can be, and frequently have been, examined in terms of their surrealist roots, it is clear that they can just as convincingly be viewed in relation to postmodern cinema. *Le Fantôme de la liberté*, for example, uses cuts which, while arguably less shocking than those found in Buñuel's early surrealist films, nevertheless disturb the viewer and defy temporal and narrative logic in ways that repeatedly reference anxiety, paranoia, and chaos: a straight cut from the two Préfets de Police (possibly emanating from parallel realities)[7] enjoying a drink together, to a bird staring at the camera through the bars of a cage, for example, or from the man in the park (who has given the children "dirty" postcards), as he politely raises his hat, to an extreme close-up of a large, hairy spider in a frame. Neither fitting into the narrative nor eliciting subsequent explanation, such shots challenge spectators to find (invent) the missing link that they desire. Invariably, however, any such attempts are immediately subverted as the narrative rapidly moves off in a new direction. Few transitional codes are provided, and when they are, they tend to be playful, misleading, and equally subversive. It is the case that long before the French New Wave understood that the real strength of cinema arguably lay in its ability to depict a series of "real," "present," moments able to be tamed into linearity only through the use of elaborate codes, the Surrealists had recognized this very quality, and, by eschewing or subverting such codes, Buñuel's films, from the first, revealed the explosive potential of the unexpected encounters that result. Rather than forming a single step in a logical, forward-moving narrative, therefore, each new scene or sequence constitutes an addition to a whole series of equally powerful, equally "real" events, all of which coexist simultaneously, as if in parallel worlds. At any time, these different realities may collide, clash, rebound, or converge; divisions between them are not discrete, and no hierarchical classification is provided. Hence Buñuel's preference for the realist mode: dream, imagination, memory, or day-to-day "reality" are *equally*

real; none is privileged, all are equivalent, and thus the hierarchy which is presumed by narrative codes is simply irrelevant. The film clearly fits into postmodern fractal thinking through its rejection of chronology in favor of a narrative characterized by multiplicity and simultaneity; however, it also references the multiple universes posited by quantum physics in its depiction of opposed but simultaneous realities: the impossible made real.

Before exploring more fully the significance of this idea, it is important to return briefly to the technical characteristics of Buñuel's work. Although I have so far highlighted the significance of editing in this context, it is worth noting that Buñuel himself dismisses editing as a mechanical process which enables lazy filmmakers to tidy up their work at the end of shooting. In his opinion, the key to successful filmmaking is découpage, the moment when the "segmentation" of the film occurs in his head, for this is where "the ideas of the filmmaker are defined, roughly subdivided, cut up, regrouped, and organised" (Buñuel, 2000: 133). The implications are that almost every detail of the film is decided in advance, from the angle and duration of shots to the astonishing, irrational order in which they are arranged (2000: 133–134). Buñuel's editing, he claims, occurs in his head long before he takes scissors to celluloid. Of course, chance events may well intervene at the editing stage, adding further impetus to the shock of the unexpected, but on the whole the disruptive fractal structures of the films have been painstakingly planned in advance, so that the repeated and random shifts in perspective and direction, the conflicting realities and fragmentary stories *are* the actual meanings of the film, not mere stylistic appendages or cleverly conceived cryptic clues for us to decipher.

Attempting to describe the film's innovative structure Wood draws a thoughtful comparison with two complex literary works: Italo Calvino's *If On a Winter's Night a Traveller* (1979) and Jorge Luis Borges' *The Garden of Forking Paths* (1941), pointing out that all three offer multiple stories through a narrative-as-labyrinth form. Nevertheless, he admits, the novels provide an internal coherence that is not found in the film, where narrative switches occur without reason, and stories never actually converge but "just take off and never come back, as if we lived in a world where there were repetitions and patterns and thematic echoes, but no progression of plot" (2000: 31). Wood's comments suggest another fractal characteristic: scalar repetition-variation, which, as we have already noted, is a key element in fractal geometry, and a common characteristic of postmodern fractal narratives. Buñuel is fascinated by shifting patterns of repetition and variation, and they are a common structural device in his work: "I have always felt attracted, both in life and in my films, by things that repeat themselves," he claims (1985: 231–232). *El ángel exterminador* (The Exterminating Angel, 1962), for example, contains at least a dozen key repetition-variations, while the recurring patterns that structure *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie*, not least the characters' repeated failure to enjoy a typical middle-class dinner party, are so dense and rhythmic that the film is often likened to music: "a film with variations of the same theme"

(Catlett, 1999: 43).[8] The musical analogy is perceptive; nevertheless, like Deleuze, I maintain that the real significance of the repetition-variations lies in their ability to create multiple, simultaneous realities, and it may be helpful to consider these ideas in greater detail before applying them to specific examples from *Le Fantôme de la liberté*.

The importance of Deleuze in this context is that he is perhaps the only person to have recognized that the key to Buñuel's (late) films is their preoccupation with the complex nature of time. Like the French writer/director Alain Robbe-Grillet, suggests Deleuze, Buñuel liberates narrative from its traditional chronological constraints to create a diegetic world composed of multiple, simultaneous "presents": "present of past, present of present, and present of future" (1989: 98). This is primarily achieved through the repetition-variations that we have been discussing, for rather than moving us into the future, or returning us to the past, they repeatedly depict the same event, "played out in … different worlds in incompatible versions" (1989: 99). In other words, each apparent repetition occupies its own temporal and spatial reality, and each – in its own terms – is entirely plausible and entirely real. However, when they are assembled, for example, in an attempt to interpret the film as a whole, we are faced with clashing, contradictory realities which create an "incompossible" situation (1989: 98). Deleuze thus realized that the films do not, as so many critics maintain, depict a range of subjective or imaginary viewpoints occurring in one and the same world, but "one and the same event in different objective worlds, all implicated in the event" (1989: 100). This idea brings us neatly back to the notion of the fractal, and provides the starting point for a brief analysis of a few scenes from *Le Fantôme de la liberté*.

My first example concerns an event which takes place in the opening sequence of the film (which is initially presented as a historical adaptation of a short story by the Spanish Romantic poet, Gustavo A. Bécquer), when a French captain in Napoleon's occupying army vows that he will sleep with the mortal remains of the lovely Doña Elvira (whose statue in the church he has defiled). Breaking open her tomb and unfolding the shroud, he discovers the body of a beautiful young woman, untouched by death. In the seventh episode of the film, although the Préfet de Police does not actually manage to break open the coffin containing the body of his sister, dead for four years, nevertheless, the long, glossy, tresses dangling out from the coffin presage a similar discovery. A further repetition-variation on this theme occurs in the third episode, as a young man, mad with desire, pulls back the blankets that are covering the body of his elderly aunt, to reveal her beautiful, youthful form, untouched by age. Whilst all three examples raise issues of desire, sexuality, and the objectification of women, their main role is to provide small-scale instances of the film's overall concern with the articulation of multiple, simultaneous and contradictory realities which defy temporal logic. The long-dead body in the first episode is endowed with the properties of life, and the Préfet de Police's dead sister not only still has beautiful hair, but is able to telephone to ask him to visit her tomb.

Other repetition-variations which deliberately reference and subvert notions of logical truth include the use of a letter as evidence, in the second episode. A male protagonist, consulting his doctor (an event which itself is repeated in varied form in episode 5), complains about sleepless nights in which he is plagued by the visits of strange people and creatures. When the doctor dismisses this account as a mere dream, insisting that he needs a psychiatrist rather than a doctor, the man produces physical evidence of the reality of the nocturnal interruptions: a letter, delivered to him by one of his nocturnal "visitors," a postman on a bicycle. Moments later, a second letter is given to the same doctor by his nurse, as proof that her father is seriously ill and that she needs leave to visit him. Whereas the doctor is highly skeptical about the status of the dream letter, he unquestioningly accepts the second and allows the nurse to depart. All of which appears very logical. However, the problem is that we actually witnessed the postman delivering the letter in what, logically, might be "dismissed" as a dream sequence, whereas there is nothing at all to support the veracity of the second letter. In other words, the very criteria with which we would normally evaluate truth or fiction are meaningless. Nor are we shown the content of the letters, for the first of which, unlike the second, the doctor must don reading glasses. In fact, the playful frustration of our expectation of evidence is a device repeatedly used in Buñuel's films. For example, several times in *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie*, loud noises (a passing car, an airplane, the clattering of typewriters) drown the characters' words at moments when they seem vital to our understanding of what is happening. In *Le Fantôme de la liberté*, we are twice promised an explanation of the disappearance and rescue of the missing child but, on each occasion, all we hear is the first sentence of the account. Of course, there can be no explanation (other than in the spectator's imagination); there can only be questions in this fractal world. No less disturbing than the frustrating withholding of anticipated "answers" are the incongruous recurring images of birds, animals, and objects which defy interpretation – despite their apparent significance – and make it impossible to distinguish between dream and conscious reality, or space and time. Even the soundtrack uses complex repetition-variations which we repeatedly hear at unexpected moments: the chiming of bells, the striking or ticking of clocks, the sinister sound of gunshots, and the angry chanting of crowds, for example. Such sounds set up patterns of expectation, even recognition, but recognition of what? Like the powerful internal "memories" they appear to create within the narrative, these patterns refuse clarity or logic since they support events which we perceive as impossible. Repetition-variations in this film reveal that nothing is what it seems, that no state is single or definitive, and that there can be no certainty.

The third episode, in particular, explores the way in which these fractal patterns, at whatever scale, foreground the overall structure of the film. It begins as we suddenly switch from a man in a doctor's surgery, whose experiences we have been following, to a young woman (the nurse in that surgery) as she sets



Figure 26.1 Stories hidden in rooms: the Flamenco dancer in *Le Fantôme de la liberté*. Dean Film, Greenwich Film Productions and Jet Films.

off in her car to visit her seriously ill father. A sudden storm is the chance event that causes her to spend the night in a small, rural hotel that she happens to be passing. The hotel, as microcosm of the entire film, contains a motley assortment of characters, brought together by chance. These characters include, in addition to the young woman and the hotel owner, a group of Carmelite monks, a flamenco dancer and her guitar-playing partner, a hatter from Nîmes and his assistant, Mademoiselle Rosenblum, and a teenage boy, there to consummate an affair with his elderly aunt. The bedrooms of all these characters are on the first floor of the hotel, and Buñuel uses the device of doors which, now open, now shut, offer us tantalizing and partial glimpses of the unconnected characters and stories within, to replicate and foreground the film's overall structure. Initially, the characters inhabit their own rooms, as so many discrete spaces; the doors are closed, and the stories are hidden. But as they leave their rooms, chance encounters create a dynamic network of relations. For example, an elderly monk tries the door of the bathroom and, finding it occupied, returns to his room and shuts its door. From the bathroom emerges a flamenco dancer who, in turn, enters her room, in which we discover a man playing a guitar (Figure 26.1). She leaves the door open and we watch as the dance builds toward a climax. However, before this happens, another character (the hatter) angrily slams her door, abruptly ending both the music and the story contained within. He then returns to his room and shuts his door. Immediately, we cut to another monk, climbing the stairs, carrying a carafe of water. He enters his room and an unidentified figure within closes the door, whereupon the old monk returns to



Figure 26.2 Unexpected events: dominatrix and hatter in *Le Fantôme de la liberté.* Euro International Film EIA and Greenwich Film Productions.

the bathroom and enters, shutting the door behind him. At once a door on the right opens and another monk emerges, and so on. The speed at which this carefully choreographed sequence occurs creates a sense of farce that briefly recalls the lively corridor shots in Renoir's *La Règle du jeu* (The Rules of the Game, 1939). Buñuel gradually allows us to see further into the rooms, even to enter them, as the various characters' paths intersect and different groups and encounters are set up. The monks, for instance, all end up inside the young woman's room, initially to pray for her father, later to drink, flirt, blaspheme, and gamble. Later still, the woman and the monks, along with the young man (whose amorous advances have temporarily been frustrated), assemble in the room of the hatter and his assistant, where they make desultory conversation until, suddenly, the hatter, his bare bottom in close-up, is whipped by his dominatrix assistant, whereupon they indignantly leave (Figure 26.2). Like the film as a whole, therefore, this sequence offers a series of characters who meet by chance, briefly exchange stories, and are then carried off in another direction, and we are given incomplete glimpses of the stories, without context, explanation, or conclusion. Moreover, this sequence, like so much of the film, is fast paced, filled with satirical asides and one-liners, and very, very funny. Nowhere does Buñuel mock more effectively the usual suspects, while astonishing us, along with the characters, at every turn. But it is the way that the stories are set up, the constant flux, the unpredictable encounters and edits that require us to think about the film's overall structure, and to consider afresh the very nature of narrative and filmic representation.

Parallel Realities and Schrödinger's cat

My second paradigmatic example occurs in one of the stories that compose the fifth episode of the film, and concerns the drama of a missing child. It begins a few minutes into the episode, and is motivated by the sudden ringing of a telephone, which interrupts a conversation between a couple seated in their expensively furnished Paris flat. The phone call informs them that that their young daughter has disappeared from school.

We cut directly to the school as the worried parents, accompanied by the child's nanny, arrive and are greeted by a distraught headmistress who explains the *impossibility* of what has happened. Given that the children had been under constant supervision, she comments, it is simply not possible for one of them to have vanished, and yet she has.

In the classroom, the children are doing a dictation. Aliette, the "missing" child, is actually there, like the others, seated at her desk. She kisses her nanny, and repeatedly attempts to talk to her mother who crossly tells her that it is rude to interrupt. The teachers' detailed account of the events takes the form of a false syllogism: when, on entering the classroom, the children were counted, Aliette was there, *therefore*, she was missing.

At the police station, the parents report their missing daughter, who is seated next to them, and even as they consider with the police officer the possibility that she has been kidnapped, it is the child herself who helps to compile the missing-person report that is to be circulated around Paris. Like the teachers, we, the spectators, are thus directly confronted with an impossible situation: the child is missing; the child is there in front of us (Figure 26.3).

It is interesting to consider briefly some of the critical responses this situation has inspired, as they clearly reveal the desire to reconcile the impossible elements by imposing on the narrative the hierarchical notion of reality that Buñuel determinedly rejects. For example, Evans interprets this sequence as an illustration of "Buñuel's obsession with the failures of perception … connected with questions of family conflict" (1995: 41). He argues that the parents are so absorbed in their own problems that they fail to take account of the needs, and even the existence, of their daughter. This reading supports his wider view of the film as the exposure of the faults and weaknesses of contemporary society. Mellen too adopts a moralistic tone, claiming that the purpose of this sequence is to remind us that "we have substituted arbitrary wilfulness for freedom, like the parents … who insist on declaring their daughter a missing person, although she's sitting plainly before them" (1978: 319). She argues that the man and his wife have become so fixated on the idea that their child is missing that they "sacrifice the freedom of perception" (1978: 328). This chimes neatly with Mellen's overall reading of the film, which is that freedom is not possible in contemporary society, but it only does so because she has reduced to a form of logical symbolism the impossibility with which this particular sequence confronts us.



Figure 26.3 Policeman studies "lost" child in *Le Fantôme de la liberté*. Euro International Film EIA and Greenwich Film Productions.

What is largely ignored in such interpretations is that it is not only the parents who are faced with the present–absent child. Both the teachers and the police deal with the paradoxical situation as if absolutely normal. The teachers count, and Aliette is there, *therefore* not there. The police consult the child in the composition of their description of her, and even congratulate the parents on having brought her with them, since this facilitates their search. Moreover, when, in the final part of the sequence, the parents are summoned to collect their miraculously "found" daughter, it is clear that she has remained with them throughout her absence. To be fair, Mellen does attempt some sort of response, claiming that the Préfet de Police, "in a wild display of *our wilful blindness to the reality staring us in the face*, asks the child herself for her vital statistics" (1978: 328, emphasis added). I have italicized "our wilful blindness to the reality staring us in the face," because I see, revealed in this phrase, a lack of understanding of the way in which Buñuel structures his diegetic worlds, since it supposes that there is a single reality that "stares us in the face," so that everything which contradicts that reality must exist only at the symbolic/ideological level. While it is true that the ambiguous open-endedness of the film invites us to select our own paths through it, nevertheless the sort of reading that ignores or emasculates the narrative conflicts, inconsistencies, and impossibilities appears unnecessarily reductive.

Using the fractal lens of the postmodern, I have argued that Buñuel's films set out to create equivalent realities: parallel or multiple worlds. At this point, I would like to refer to the well-known paradox explored by the Austrian physicist Erwin Schrödinger in 1935, in his imaginary experiment, known as the cat problem.

The experiment sets out to illustrate one of the aspects of quantum mechanics that constitutes the basis for later work on parallel realities. In it, a cat is placed, for one hour, in a metal box, along with a flask containing poison and a radioactive isotope which has a 50 percent chance of decaying within that time. If the isotope starts to decay, an internal Geiger counter will detect radiation, the flask will shatter, and the cat will die. If, on the other hand, no decay occurs, the cat will live. In the terms of the quantum theory of superimposition, the importance of this notion is that, for the hour that it is inside the box, the cat is both alive *and* dead. It strikes me that the opposing states that are referenced through the absent–present child require of us the same open-mindedness. What if, instead of insisting on a single reality "staring us in the face," we seize the exciting potential of multiple and equivalent realities? Here, it is helpful to return briefly to Deleuze's observations on the plural universes implied by such incidents: "These are not subjective (imaginary) points of view in one and the same world, but one and the same event in different objective worlds" (1989: 100). If we accept the film's multiple realities, we can surely discover new ways of understanding and thinking about cinema itself.

While a chapter such as this can only scratch the surface of the new interpretative strategies that become possible if we break away from symbolic reasoning, grounded in traditional logic, nevertheless it has been possible to indicate some of the insights that may result from such a move. By considering Buñuel's films through a fractal lens, and by viewing them in terms of postmodern cinema, their continuing relevance to the understanding of the polyphonic and chaotic nature of reality becomes clear. At the same time, the extreme complexity and potential reversibility of the structure of *Le Fantôme de la liberté* reveals ways in which Buñuel's cinema questions and reformulates the very nature of cinematic representation.

Notes

1 Amongst the most familiar early examples is Durgnat's argument that the razor and eye at the start of *Un chien andalou* are "*evident* symbols for male and female organs" (1967: 24, emphasis added), while the scene that follows has variously been "solved" as meaning anything from castration and rape to childbirth and creativity. For an analysis of the scene's complexities, see Everett (1998).

2 Part of the objective of the critic is, of course, to view films afresh by displacing them from their accepted contexts. Two useful examples of this approach are Fredric Jameson's description of Jean-Luc Godard's cinema as postmodern before its time: "postmodern *avant la lettre*" (1992: 162), and Linda Williams's argument that Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960) is "a quintessentially postmodern film" (2000: 351).

3 Various other terms have also been used to describe such films, including ensemble films, mosaic films, hyperlink narratives, forking-paths narratives, and multi-protagonist films.

4 I suspect this situation is changing. For instance, the film's radical linearity and paradigmatic variations are referenced in Kinder (1993), and it is cited as an example of network cinema, a widely acknowledged feature of the postmodern, in Tobias (1999).

5 In an interesting article on "Buñuel's Net Work," James Tobias looks briefly at *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* in terms of its "real power networks" (1999: 157). However, although the idea of network is a major component of the postmodern (see, for example, Watts, 2003; Everett, 2005), Tobias is not concerned with this aspect, but with the "the power network that cinema is" (1999: 159).

6 In the chance-governed potential scenario that Buñuel imagines in *My Last Breath*, he points out that the narrative can just as easily be followed in the opposite direction; that the single, chance event that triggers the story can be reversed to "change the course of history, and lead to the end of the world" (1985: 172). Again, the closeness of his ideas to those propounded in the butterfly theory is striking.

7 Deleuze considers that the decision, in *Cet obscur objet du désir*, to cast two characters and two actresses as one person, thus creating "a plurality of worlds," is one of Buñuel's "finest inventions" (1989: 99–100). I would argue that in bringing face to face the two manifestations of a single character, in this scene from *Le Fantôme de la liberté*, the plurality of worlds is both highlighted and deconstructed.

8 Buñuel himself several times likened filmic composition to that of music, and other critics to have considered his work in this light include Oms (1985), and Sánchez Vidal (1991).

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Part Seven

And in the Spring

27

Mutilation, Misogyny, and Murder

Surrealist Violence or Torture Porn?

Paul Begin

New York Magazine film critic David Edelstein recently asked why America "seems so nuts these days about torture?" (Edelstein, 2006: s.n.). This is in reference to the box-office success of films such as *Wolf Creek* (2005), *The Devil's Rejects* (2005), and especially the duo of *Hostel* (2005) and *Saw* (2004) and their sequels, films that are littered with protracted scenes of torture and dismemberment.[1] As another commentator noted, "Horror movies have always been violent, but in recent years, it seems, they've reached gruesome new lows" (Rogers, 2010: s.n.). Due to their graphic depictions of extreme violence, nudity, torture, mutilation, and sadism, as well as an attending jargon that stems from the pornographic film industry, these films have garnered a new moniker: torture porn.[2] Edelstein (2006) has used this term to describe films in which physically violent acts are combined with explicit sexuality, effectively combining two of what Carol Clover has referred to as "sensation genres" (2000: 126–127). A succinct example would be Eli Roth's faux trailer segment, *Thanksgiving* (2007), which depicts a cheerleader peeling off her clothes while bouncing on a trampoline when she is suddenly impaled with a large, gleaming knife through the vagina. Meanwhile, the most discussed scene from the original installment of *Hostel* depicts a man taking a blowtorch to a woman's face, her eyeball coming out and dangling from the socket. Another character later snips it off with some scissors. The director, Roth, in telling fashion, has referred to this scene as the "eye-gasm," a reference that epitomizes the genre's sadism. In an interview Roth quips: "Obviously the violence, people loved, you know. They love the eye getting cut out, they love the girls getting run over" (Fischer, 2007: s.n.). Mutilation and severed limbs, murder, the confluence of violence and sexual desire, misogyny, and ambivalence, the "eye-gasm" – haven't we seen this all before?[3]

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Figure 27.1 The free exchange of body parts in *Un chien andalou* prefigures that of pornography. Luis Buñuel.

The films of Luis Buñuel, in particular the early surrealist films of *Un chien andalou* (An Andalusian Dog, 1929) and *L'Âge d'or* (The Golden Age, 1930), depict several strikingly similar scenarios. *Un chien andalou* famously begins with a man (Buñuel himself) sharpening a razor blade that unexpectedly and arbitrarily slices through the eye of the female protagonist (Simone Mareuil). Other images and sequences include a severed hand, a hand with a hole in the center that is filled with live ants, a woman being arbitrarily run over by an automobile, a random murder, decomposed bodies on the seashore, and the transposition of body parts – such as when Mareuil's armpit hair (which appears more like female pubic hair) appears on the mouth of the male protagonist (Pierre Batcheff), for example (Figure 27.1). Violence and sexual desire are conjoined when this male attempts to rape the female protagonist upon seeing an androgynous woman run over in the street. Meanwhile, the male protagonist of *L'Âge d'or* (Gaston Modot) punts a dog, slaps a woman, and generally splits his time between violently acting out and pursuing sexual fulfillment with the female protagonist (Lya Lys) in public spaces. In addition, a father shoots his son for trivial reasons while there are overt allusions to the female protagonist masturbating and committing fellatio. The violent and sexual overtones of *L'Âge d'or* reach a climax in the final sequence in which the Marquis de Sade participates in an orgy and subsequent murder. While certainly less graphic than contemporary cinema, in Buñuel's early surrealist films one will find, quite literally, similar if not exactly the same images – the mutilated eye, a woman run over by a car, severed limbs, a sadistic orgy or rape, allusions to masturbation and oral sex coupled with other random violent acts, and even a

dash of filicide. Although Buñuel's films seem more light-hearted now, especially within the present context of a media system that consistently aims to ratchet up the realism, both *Un chien andalou* and *L'Âge d'or* still contain images that were, by the standards of the time, shocking. Indeed, Jonathan Jones claims that it was Buñuel who paved the way for horror cinema and its progeny (Jones, 2004: s.n.). Buñuel referred to *Un chien andalou* as a desperate and passionate call to murder (Buñuel, 1929: 34).[4] While this call to murder is not interpreted as a literal call for mass violence but rather a desire for a total dissolution of the dominant social order, the fact remains that there is a common thread between the surrealist films of Buñuel and the torture porn or "gorno" features of today.

Though there is abundant criticism dedicated to Buñuel's life and films, mostly in terms of psychoanalysis and biographical information, there are still gaps in criticism if we consider the fact that almost any survey of film theory and film history will refer to *Un chien andalou* as seminal while simultaneously offering little to no speculation as to how it links up with one of its most obvious kin – the horror film. Jones suggests that *Un chien andalou* has paved the way for horror films, stating: "This macabre anti-cinema has poisoned film ever since, not just in art movies, but in thrillers, horror films, comedy" (2004). What follows is an attempt to draw some points of confluence between horror film, and torture porn in particular, with its attendant critical debate, and Buñuel's surrealist violence, asking the question: Is it surrealist violence or torture porn?

For the Surrealists, the cinema was a space for social revolt and the exploration of sexual fantasies. Elza Adamowicz reminds us that the surrealist group, Buñuel included, was enamored of popular cinema, specifically American comedy (Chaplin, Keaton, Langdon, Menjou), and horror films (Robert Wiene's *Das Kabinett des Dr. Caligari* [The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari, 1919]), over and above art house-style filmmaking.[5] In Buñuel's early writings on cinema, for example, he touts American comedy with Charlie Chaplin, Harry Langdon, and Buster Keaton as the equivalent of Surrealism in the cinema, much more so than, say, the "artistic" films of fellow Surrealist Man Ray (Buñuel, 2000: 183–184, 199). American comedy, for Buñuel, represents a filmic world cleansed of sentimentality and culture, making it more "vital." He describes Buster Keaton's *Battling Butler* (1926) as "Asepsia. Desinfección. Liberada de la tradicción" ("Sterilization. Disinfection. Free from Tradition") (Buñuel, 2000: 183). In "Art Films, Anti-Artistic Spool," Dalí observes that "only anti-artistic cinema, and more particularly, comic cinema, produces films which are more and more perfect, where emotion is more immediately intense and amusing" (Dalí, 1998: 27). It is this anti-artistic, non-sentimental quality that Surrealists such as Dalí and Buñuel favored in art for its vitality and its ability to provoke raw, unmediated emotion (Dalí, 1998: 24; Buñuel, 2000: 183–184).

As with comedy, horror films were appreciated for their lack of sentimentality, their lack of technical virtuosity, and their ability to engage the spectator. Surrealist poet Robert Desnos wrote of the horror film *Das Kabinett des Dr. Caligari* that it is

"one of those in which emotion comes closest to terror" (cited in Matthews, 1971: 27). Nöel Carroll has written that there exists, "some intimate relation of affinity between horror and humor" (Carroll, 2001: 238). Citing Freud, Carroll links comedy to Freud's "The 'Uncanny,'" "which is as close as Freud comes to a theory of horror" (Carroll, 2001: 238). For Carroll, comedy and horror both manifest repressed modes of unconscious thinking (2001: 238). Along with American comedy, horror also provided for Buñuel an aseptic outlook. Much like the stare of Buster Keaton, the horror film treats humans as objects and offers no sentimentality or arbitrary values. We could compare this outlook to the faux documentary that functions as the introduction to *L'Âge d'or*, in which the scorpions behave violently based on survival instincts only, totally outside the realm of morality and culture. In other words, this predilection for popular cinema had less to do with the storytelling aspect of these films and more to do with "the power of the cinematic image to fascinate, shock, and create the marvelous out of the real" (Adamowicz, 2010: 25–26). That is, Surrealists were attracted to the sheer corporeality of these film genres and their ability to generate audience engagement through the image. Simply put, context and narrative coherence are irrelevant in surrealist cinema since, according to Dalí, "every cinema image is the capture of an unquestionable spirituality" (Dalí, 1998: 23). Images freed from context are meant to stand on their own so that the spectator may react to the image without resorting to a secondary question of the image's relationship to narrative or symbolic systems, such as the sliced eye or the severed hand (Figure 27.2). Such images provoke a visceral reaction, laughter or gasping in fear. While this is not



Figure 27.2 The severed hand and subsequent death arouse the male protagonist in *Un chien Andalou*. Luis Buñuel.

entirely true for the contemporary horror film, given that there is some plot and suspense, the point is to provide a vehicle for deploying scenes of graphic violence.

Buñuel's surrealist cinema, though in distinct ways, certainly borrows from the early manifestations of these genres while also reacting against what would be considered artistic films, such as the Impressionist films of Germaine Dulac and Jean Epstein. The heterogeneous "parts" of both *Un chien andalou*, *L'Âge d'or*, and even *Las Hurdes*, aka *Tierra sin pan* (Land without Bread, 1933), all contribute to the sense that there is no one style for surrealist film. Surrealist film, even in the case of Buñuel, is not limited to one single feature or aim, and one could set about defining it from several different angles. At the core of surrealist artistic efforts would be a notion of human freedom. As Breton wrote, freedom is a human's only legitimate aspiration (Breton, 2004: 4). For Buñuel, the key to this freedom lies in man's ability to rehabilitate his consciousness from the arbitrary mores and values of society. This is why insects and animals emerge in all of his films; they not only provide some shock value, but also reveal buried human drives without the burden of social constructs (Begin, 2007). This is done through several techniques but also through violence and eroticism. As Rachael Johnson observes: "Surrealist violence has a terrible purity to it; its very form arguably liberates it from the social sphere" (Johnson, 2004: 259). In fact, *Un chien andalou* and *L'Âge d'or* were the standard in terms of violence and sadism within surrealist film. Take, for example, the Surrealist Georges Hugnet's 1931 review of Miró's paintings, in which he makes clear reference to *Un chien andalou*:

> We find once again a Spanish legacy of cruelty, insolence and pride, in this taste for blood and atrocious symbolic realism. There is also "a desperate call to murder" in these tortured instruments for the New Inquisition. Art at the foot of the fetish, at the door of taboos, is carrying the rope, is pierced by nails, strangled and crucified by material images. Dalí's sadism has its own torture chamber. (Hugnet, 1931: 7–8)

The term "torture chamber" is telling. While *Un chien andalou*'s status within a specific genre is an open debate, what is certain is that Surrealists enjoyed filmic violence precisely for its ability to disturb and present a disquieting view of everyday life that exists outside the realm of cultural and religious values. It is maximum shock value.

Linda Williams, among others, has noted that this thirst for violence is always linked to sexuality. She rightly asserts that *Un chien andalou*, first and foremost, is about desire and that this desire is expressed through violence: "the physical violence of the eye-cutting of the prologue opens up a literal and figural gap out of which the rest of the film's exploration of unconscious sexual fantasy spills, just as the gelatinous fluid spills out of the eye" (Williams, 1981: 102). Over the years it is precisely this eye-slicing scene that has been the focus of hundreds of articles, both scholarly and popular, such that I will not be attempting in any fashion to synthesize all the literature surrounding this foundational scene. It is, however,

worth dedicating some space to it as it as a preamble to the present consideration of surrealist violence vis-à-vis torture porn.

Un chien andalou begins with an act of violence that, while it remains a shocking moment in film, is not to be read as a simple case of creating something for its shock value alone. Buñuel wanted to induct the viewer into the world of the unconscious.[6] As Kovács notes, "the violence of the opening scene is not an isolated case. It recurs throughout the movie, always as a function of sexuality" (Kovács, 1980: 205). Digging deeper, Williams points out: "Physical violence is used as a catalyst for even more radical forms of textual violence, to cue a textual progression to a greater interiority of vision (or envision)" (Williams, 1981: 101). This concept of envision is perhaps the most insightful way to understand *Un chien andalou*. Envision, or mindscreen, "is a filmic visual field that presents itself as the product of a mind" (Williams, 1981: 101–102); that is, *Un chien andalou* is a film designed to show the spectator the workings of a mind in its unconscious state, as opposed to the subjective camera point of view designed to mimic the function of the eye. Yet, what is often missed in the psychoanalytic approaches to the film is the violent act's very *literal* dimension. Ian Walker (though perhaps taking misleading cues from Buñuel himself) suggests a focus on the direct impact of the physical action without taking into account any symbolic meaning (Walker, 1977: 5).[7] Martin Jay, for example, links the scene to Bataille's pornographic fiction and its very material nature (Jay, 1994: 258). Jay comments that "there can be little doubt that the eye seemed to many Surrealist artists less an object to be revered, less the organ of pure and noble vision, than a target of mutilation and scorn, or a vehicle of its own violence" (1994: 260). Jay's view, in a nutshell, is that the Surrealists denigrated vision in favor of the "unilluminated space where the Surrealist confronts the unconscious" (Jay, 1994: 261). Jay's study illustrates the many ways in which the eye is mutilated and scorned in the surrealist art, the prime example being Bataille's aptly named "Histoire de l'oeil" (History of the Eye), in which the eye is the central object in a text detailing the sexual and often violent exploits of three adolescents. In "Histoire de l'oeil," the bullfighter, El Granero, has his eye gouged out by a bull, and it is left dangling from its socket as he is carted off. It is here, in this very visceral space, that Bataille's work converges with *Un chien andalou*'s materiality and brings us closer to the material nature of torture porn. Accordingly, it is helpful to consider Jones's comment about *Un chien andalou*, that it is less about dream imagery than "an eroticism of the physical world, of the relationships between objects and people as opposed to between people and people" (Jones, 2004: s.n.).

This object–person relationship is necessary for understanding the mechanics of torture porn. Torture porn and other horror films that aim to take torture to an extreme while combining sexual content are characterized by an almost celebratory display of graphic violence and sexually suggestive imagery. It is, in a very simple sense, the combination of the horror film or one of its subgenres, namely the splatter film, with pornography.[8] In a way, this makes complete sense, as these genres have several commonalities: the plots, with some variation, are inevitably a

vehicle for shocking imagery – eviscerated, mutilated, and severed bodies in the case of horror, and increasingly daring sexual acts in the case of pornography. As Jay McRoy succinctly states, "parts is parts," and in both cases, pornography and horror film alike, "plot is pretense, an excuse for an intensive focus on the body's very materiality that, through an aesthetic informed by fragmentation and violence (both physical and semiotic), produces affect" (McRoy, 2010: 197). McRoy's argument is that both splatter films and hard-core pornography, "while eliciting a myriad of complex and uncomfortable 'pleasures' in their viewers, nevertheless reveal the artificiality of socio-cultural paradigms informed by modernist myths of organic wholeness" (McRoy, 2010: 192). He further argues that this is in fact an "important [avenue] for imaging social resistance" (McRoy, 2010: 192). McRoy holds that both of these genres, through their atomization of human parts, destabilize our sense of a meaningful world. Susan Sontag makes a similar observation in "The Pornographic Imagination," arguing that "the pornographic imagination tends to make one person interchangeable with another" (McRoy, 2002: 53). While McRoy's arguments are ultimately based on a somewhat tenuous notion that pornography and splatter films both possess a capacity for enabling social resistance, these films do upset notions of organic wholeness, which in turn upends the idea that human identity is fixed or transcendent. The body and its various parts, in this light, are atomized, unstable, and, in a way, de-gendered.

The view that an ultraviolent cinema, such as torture porn, can destabilize notions of an organically whole body as part of a radical social agenda resonates with surrealist aims generally and specifically with a possible reading of *Un chien andalou*. In reference to *Un chien andalou*, Adamowicz comments that "such limit-forms of corporeal representation constitute a radical revision of the classical body as whole and contained and, by extension, a revision of identity as fixed and immutable" (Adamowicz, 2010: 83). In Buñuel's early films, the exchange and substitution of body parts creates an atmosphere in which, to borrow McRoy's phrasing, parts simply are parts, and they can link up with other parts at any time. The shifting, through lap dissolve, from breasts to buttocks in *Un chien andalou*, certainly destabilizes gender constraints and heterosexual norms in terms of desire. In addition to the lack of narrative coherence, this destabilization makes it difficult to identify or empathize with the characters in the film. Characters may be understood, at least in *Un chien andalou*, as vehicles for a series of visual gags. This is not always the case; there is a certain level of narrative drive to *L'Âge d'or* while the amputated leg of *Tristana* (1970) functions diegetically as a fetish with psychological as well as social implications. The close-up of Tristana's amputated leg surpasses its narrative utility, effectively creating what Rob Stone has called a "Surrealist dare" for the Spanish censors who banned the film under the dubious infraction of referring to a duel (Stone, 2007: 30). Although the image itself is explicit, "its meaning was nonetheless latent because it was withheld and therefore dangerous, disruptive and malignant because it prompted thoughts of decay, perversity and sado-masochism that emerged from a subconscious response to its importance" (Stone, 2007: 31).

In *Un chien andalou*, also, there is a tendency to isolate parts and thereby destabilize notions of an organic whole through mutilation. Likewise, splatter films, torture porn, and pornography itself all share in this surrealist legacy insofar as these genres and subgenres often privilege specific acts and images over narrative development. Narrative is primarily a means for deploying sadistic acts and shocking audiences through images. It is worth pointing out, however, that, at least in the case of pornography, it is not simply a case of showing sex. In her comparison of musical cinema to pornographic cinema, Linda Williams argues convincingly that the episodic nature of the hard-core pornographic narrative is not about the formation of a couple or simply about showing sex, but rather "is part and parcel of the way the genre goes about resolving the often contradictory desires of its characters" (Williams, 1989: 134). While Buñuel's early surrealist films do in fact reveal the contradictory desires of humans, they still lack the sort of narrative development of pornography, the intensification and resolution to which Williams refers. If anything, *Un chien andalou* and *L'Âge d'or* frustrate in their refusal to participate in a linear, logical narrative.

The fragmented nature of Buñuel's early cinema is partially rooted in the fairground attractions of the early twentieth century, or in what Tom Gunning has labeled "the cinema of attractions" (Gunning, 2000). Fragmentation is both spatial and temporal. While parts are severed, seemingly without reason, so is narrative development. In keeping with the general aims of Surrealism, *Un chien andalou* subverts normal narrative coherence in order to allow specific images and acts to stand on their own, thereby subverting notions of logic and positivist history. In addition, one of the more recent tools for understanding surrealist cinema and *Un chien andalou* specifically is through the lens of the "cinema of attractions." Until recently, little to no attention was given to the connection between Buñuel's early films and the so-called cinema of attractions, or fairground cinema. There is definitely a connection between the director's theoretical approach to cinema and Sergei Eisenstein's "montage of attractions," based on Buñuel's early writing on cinema and his early cinematic practice. In an essay on theatre, in which there is no fundamental contradiction between how he treats film and how he treats cinema, Eisenstein writes that an attraction, or shot for our purposes, is an "independent and primary" element, that it is a "molecular compound" (Eisenstein, 1947: 231). By stitching together these primary elements, "we advance a new plane – free montage of arbitrarily selected, independent … attractions – all from the stand[point] of establishing certain final thematic effects – this is montage of attractions" (Eisenstein, 1947: 231–232). It is the juxtaposition of disparate images or shots that leads to the creation of a new idea. As James Monaco notes:

> Eisenstein, meanwhile, in suggesting an extreme Formalism in which photographed reality ceased to be itself and became instead simply a stock of raw

> material – attractions, or "shocks" – for the filmmaker to rearrange as he saw fit, was also paradoxically describing a system in which the observer was a necessary and equal participant. (Monaco, 2000: 403)

Eisenstein, in fact, "insisted that films, to be true to their medium, should be made to have as *violent* an impact as possible" (Rothman, 2001: 41, emphasis added). We will return to the role of the spectator shortly. For now, what is important is the approach to the image as a piece of information that is removed from its context and stripped of any cultural or sentimental value, an idea that goes back to Dalí's "anti-artistic" views, as well as the surrealist preference for the effects of horror film and American comedy mentioned earlier, precisely because they present a series of visual gags.[9] Adamowicz comments that the images, "appear to have a logic of their own and point to an alternative distinctive temporality – immediate, elliptical, non-developmental – running parallel and counter to the temporal unfolding characteristic of narrative" (Adamowicz, 2010: 39). Breton, for his part, favored single images and their impact on the viewer over and above the narrative of the nineteenth century (Breton, 2004: 34–36). This is precisely what Buñuel was going for, a theory of montage that would require the collaboration of the viewer (Begin, 2006: 1129).

Much of what has been mentioned here about surrealist cinema and specifically *Un chien andalou* parallels what takes place in horror pictures. On the complex structure of *Un chien andalou*, Adamowicz summarizes perfectly:

> It can be read in terms of a dialectic interaction between narrative and attraction elements, two temporalities and their interferences, in which the continuous unfolding of a story intersects with the discontinuous images of spectacular, isolated scenes, hence the ambivalent position of the spectator confronted with a film that is both artisanal gag and unsettling mise en scene of violation of the body. (Adamowicz, 2010: 41–42)

This exact description could fit virtually any torture porn feature. In a curt review, *New York Times* critic Nathan Lee dismisses Roth's *Hostel* as "motivated by an adolescent urge to shock" but that its "gory spectacles are too calculated to deliver the transgressive jolts they so obviously seek" (Lee, 2006: s.n.). *Hostel*, according to Lee, is designed much like *Un chien andalou*, as a series of visual gags. The plot is a pretense for showing one gory scene after another, with the ostensible aim of becoming progressively more gory, or sexually adventurous, or both, until death. In "The Pornographic Image," Sontag claims that most pornography is ultimately about death: "It's toward the gratifications of death, succeeding and surpassing those of eros, that every truly obscene quest ends" (Sontag, 2002: 60). The same holds true for *Un chien andalou*, *L'Âge d'or*, and even *Las Hurdes*, as well as for films such as *Hostel* and *Saw*. Like the scorpions in the prologue to *L'Âge d'or*, in which all energy leads to extinction, the characters in

torture porn films act behavioristically until extinction. They exist only to become atomized as parts in spectacular fashion and die.

Two more relevant issues require consideration, the first being the issue of gender – questioning Buñuel's misogyny – and the second being the role of the spectator in violent cinema. With respect to the violence presented in Buñuel's surrealist films, Johnson asks, "Is it gendered, specifically expressive of a masculine hysteria? Is it bound up with the violence and also the impotence of erotic passion?" (Johnson, 2004: 259). Much has been made of gender and violence toward women in the films of Buñuel, such that Paul Julian Smith has referred to it as Buñuel's "unapologetic misogyny" (Smith, 1995: 24).[10] For Carmen Rabalska, "The legacy of Buñuel's films poses problems relating to sexual politics and the practice of or position of obscenity. They harness altogether ambiguous issues, including exploitation, bad taste and misogyny in the apparent denial of 'normal powerful female subjects'" (Rabalska, 2004: 426). In the case of *Un chien andalou* specifically, the question of gender and violence is more complex than one would presume. At first glance, the film sets itself up as misogynist with a figure of male domination (Buñuel himself) slicing the eye of the seemingly passive woman. This gendered violence is temporarily upended when, a moment later, the same character is suddenly alive and looking at Vermeer's *Lacemaker*. She moves in and out of situations in which she is the object of the male protagonist's advances, eventually avoiding him only to find herself on the beach with another man and, shortly thereafter, half buried in the sand and decomposing. The more problematic source of gender discourse is that of the male protagonist played by Batcheff. Upon seeing the severed hand in the street and a woman run over by a car, Batcheff's character attempts to rape the female protagonist, a misogynistic role not unlike the one found in many splatter films. Yet this erotic impulse is undercut by his feminine attire, the appearance of female body hair on his mouth, his absurdly frustrated sexual advances, and the confrontation by alter ego. His identity is unstable and desire unfulfilled. Gender, much like everything else in the film, is unstable. The same holds true in many of Buñuel's other films, such as *Belle de jour* (1967), in which there is a "disabling of masculine agency – and the male body in particular," as part of Belle's "shift toward an active/sadistic role" (Forcer, 2004: 26).

In some ways the same is true of the contemporary cinema of violence. Horror films of varying stripes and even pornography often do "spend a lot of time looking at women, and in first-person ways that do indeed seem well described by Mulvey's 'sadistic-voyeuristic' gaze" (Clover, 1992: 8). However, as Clover goes on to point out, horror film is often far more often victim identified than perpetrator identified (Clover, 1992: 8). Moreover, there are ample examples of horror films in which the female character is the one who creatively traps, binds, and disembowels members of the opposite sex, such as with *I Spit on Your Grave* (Meir Zarchi, 1978 [original]; Stephen Monroe, 2010 [remake]). In spite of the fact that violent cinema is not always complicit in misogynistic discourses in terms of who is doing the

dismembering, there is very little ambiguity in terms of sexuality; normative heterosexual desires are affirmed even if sadistic roles are in flux.[11] Nevertheless, in both cases, that of contemporary torture porn as well as surrealist cinema, the violence is not easily identifiable as gendered in one way or another. It is instead highly nuanced.

Even Buñuel's brief (or poorly documented) interest in pornography cannot be pigeon-holed. According to Román Gubern, a pornographic film project was prefigured in the outline of *L'Âge d'or* (Gubern, 2005: 63). In the preparation phase of *L'Âge d'or*, Dalí wrote to Buñuel: "he visto una manera de realizar tu tan soñado coño en el cine" (I have seen a way to create your often dreamed-about cunt on film) (Gubern, 2005: 53). Dalí proposed two alternatives: firstly, a close-up of the lips of Lya Lys that would change into a shaved vagina, or, alternatively, a patch of pubic hair would appear suddenly around the lips of Lya Lys (Gubern, 2005: 53). The proposal never came to fruition, as evidenced by the film itself. However, according to Gubern, one can view *Belle de jour* (1967) as a "porno elegante y autoreprimido" (elegant and self-repressed porno), stemming from Buñuel's sexual frustration and the memory of his youthful escapades to the brothels of Madrid, which he considered to be the best in the world (Gubern, 2005: 63). It should also be noted that with *Belle de jour* some scenes were cut or altered (mutilated, according to Gubern) by the censors (Gubern, 2005: 63). It is interesting to note that, in *Mi último suspiro* (My Last Sigh), Buñuel mentions that he once planned to make a pornographic film while in New York, with Marcel Duchamp and Fernand Léger (1982: 177). He abandoned the project, apparently, because of the risk it posed – a ten-year prison sentence (Pérez Turrent and de la Colina, 1993: 42). Elsewhere Buñuel adds: "Pensábamos que sería un escándalo. Ahora el escándalo no es lo que era antes: ahora sirve para engordar a una decena de productores" (We used to think that it would be a scandal. Scandal is not what it used to be: now it only functions to line the pockets of a dozen producers) (Buñuel, 1982: 42). The director's lament, that scandal is no longer possible, is perhaps the key distinction between surrealist violence and torture porn. Pornography, and violent cinema for that matter, is, for Buñuel, not a simple exercise in titillation, but rather part of a larger project of destabilization of dominant ideologies. Once it became commercialized Buñuel lost interest.

It seems plausible that in order to create scandal there must be a certain type of engagement with the spectator. It has been mentioned that in Buñuel's surrealist cinema the spectator is supposed to be active, not passive. But there are other considerations as well. In the case of *Un chien andalou*, for example, where does the viewer stand vis-à-vis the mutilation of the eye, the cyclist who is run over, the attempted rape of the female protagonist, or the antics of Gaston Modot in *L'Âge d'or*? If, as mentioned earlier, *Un chien andalou* is a film that elicits participation, where is the spectator located – in sympathy with the man (Buñuel) holding the razor or with the woman (Simone Mareuil) whose eye is being sliced while she sits passively? Are we sadists or masochists? Or are we supposed to just sit back and laugh at the absurdity of it all?

Adamowicz offers several alternatives, one being Breton's hope that the cinema would disorient the spectator (Adamowicz, 2010: 42). The function of disorienting the spectator is to rehabilitate consciousness. Following the concept of *ostraneiene* as theorized by Victor Shklovsky and the early Russian formalists, the function of art is to rehabilitate everyday perception by making objects "unfamiliar" and forms difficult, "to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself" (Shklovsky, 1965: 12). While Shklovsky describes how art "removes objects from the automatism of perception" (Shklovsky, 1965: 13), surrealist films such as *Un chien andalou* and *Las Hurdes* carry this out to an extreme. The normal viewing process is disrupted through various editing strategies: chronological jumps, ellipses, irrational associations, superimpositions, dissolves, and the images themselves. Because the narrative itself is baffling at times, the objects or images linger in the consciousness. One conclusion, then, is that *Un chien andalou* is meant to prevent spectatorial identification altogether. It seems, therefore, to go back to an earlier suggestion, that rather than "identify" with any one character, the point is to disrupt standard film viewing praxis and experience the logic of the unconscious. Disruption and disorientation lead to meditation ("What did I just see?"), thus provoking a discourse between the subconscious and conscious.

In the case of torture porn, however, the role of the spectator is rather clear, even though not rigidly defined in terms of gender. There is no attempt to produce, as Buñuel hoped, a free association of ideas. Our ideas are seemingly directed to one singular purpose, that is, the enjoyment of dismemberment, nudity (primarily female), mutilation, and mayhem. Disparate images are never fused to create new images. Rather body parts are atomized in order to titillate. McRoy writes that spectators of horror film, "like many viewers of hard-core pornographic cinema, watch almost exclusively for the spectacle embedded within the narrative," thus forming "an audience of viewers seeking titillation and repulsed by vivid portrayals of physiognomies disemboweled and dismembered" (McRoy, 2010: 199). This motivating factor – titillation – is, perhaps, the major distinction between the torture porn flick and its surrealist predecessor. Films such as *Saw* and *Hostel* are constructed so as to deploy over the course of the film an ever more aggressive, violent, impossible series of images that will keep the viewer anchored to the chair, anxiously awaiting the next sadistic spectacle. If they are disorienting, it is because so much of the protracted violence is beyond comprehension.

Indeed, one of the draws to ultraviolent cinema is in fact its very predictability, and in some cases intertextuality. If surrealist film is meant to engage the spectator in a mental game with no ostensible aim other than a break from the normative logic of everyday life, then torture porn is meant to meet an a priori agreement in which the spectator anticipates acts of extreme violence. Andrew Britton has observed that patrons of horror/slasher/torture porn arrive with a set of expectations for the film and that the film's predictability is in fact its primary source of pleasure (Britton, 1986: 2–3). It is a cinema of narrative predictability produced for

a mass audience – hence the sequels. If these were meant to challenge the spectator and help the spectator "break out" of a passive stupor, then sequels, logically, would not suffice. Repetition is needed to create consistency, the bread and butter of big production studios. The director may try to vary the gags and will most certainly attempt to up the ante in terms of visual effects, violence, and sexual explicitness; however, the audience already knows what to expect – the spectator may not know exactly when or exactly how gruesome, but he or she does know that gore is coming at some point, and hopefully when it is least expected.

The question of expectation is key to understanding the difference between surrealist violence and contemporary ultraviolence in the cinema. For Johnson, "Surrealist violence is demonstrated in our contemporary cinema of violence. The surreal bond between humour and violence is wildly, extremely manifested in such directors as Quentin Tarantino" (Johnson, 2004: 261). Yet there exist major divergences, specifically if one takes seriously the implications of Buñuel's claim that *Un chien andalou* was a passionate call to murder. Given the attention that media violence has received since the 1960s, with films such as *Bonnie and Clyde* (Arthur Penn, 1967) and *The Wild Bunch* (Sam Peckinpah, 1969), especially in light of shooting rampages such as those of Dunblane, Scotland and Littleton, Colorado, it would be unsavvy for any director to make such an outlandish claim. Nowadays people actually do open fire into crowds, and popular cinema has been implicated on more than one occasion (Prince, 2000). But torture porn and other forms of ultraviolent cinema make no claims to social revolution – social commentary maybe.[12] As mentioned above, the atomization of parts, the titillation, the shock value, and suspense leading up to choreographed torture are expected and even desired. The sequels and remakes testify to this fact. But there is not a continuum in the same way for films such as *Un chien andalou*, *L'Âge d'or*, or even *Las Hurdes*. Violence, eroticism, and sadomasochism are presented as episodic, not as anticipated parts of the narrative drive. No sequel is possible because there is not a narrative thread to extend, any character development to continue, or any revenge to be exacted. As Johnson observes, "Surrealist violence is not driven by ideology and profit" (Johnson, 2004: 259). That Buñuel's violence is not driven by ideology is questionable; an anti-ideological stance is itself ideological. Yet there is, for sure, no profit motive connected to Buñuel's violence.[13] Creators of film series such as *Hostel* and *Saw* want their spectators to leave shocked but fully satisfied, having received their fill of gore, sexuality, and suspense. Buñuel apparently wanted his audience to leave confused and pensive, the mind more receptive.

As we have mentioned, there is a shared set of actions and characteristics between the early surrealist films of Buñuel and contemporary torture porn and its ilk. Jones is observant in noting the way in which *Un chien andalou* sets the stage for horror cinema generally. Ultraviolent cinema participates in the legacy of the "cinema of attractions" through its exploitation of plot for gags. It capitalizes on the most visceral elements of cinema, exchanging organic wholeness for a de-sacralized view of the body. Torture porn accordingly conflates sexuality and violence. Representations

of gender are at times consistent with the male voyeuristic gaze and at times nuanced, with female characters taking on a sadistic role. In fact, as pointed out at the beginning of this essay, it is remarkable how many similarities exist between the surrealist violence of *Un chien andalou* and *L'Age d'or* at the formal level. Buñuel's films certainly lack the gruesome special effects of contemporary torture porn and the like, but this is not for lack of effort. One can only speculate that, given the budget, means, and freedom to make a film as they would have liked, Buñuel and Dalí would have made something infinitely more violent and sexually explicit. They were already pushing the limits of acceptable cinema as it was. There is, however, a major distinction between the more extreme iterations of horror film and the violence of Buñuel's cinema and this distinction does not fit neatly into a predefined academic category. What I am referring to is perhaps best described as an attitude vis-à-vis the spectator. Montage, *mise en scène*, representation in terms of gender, and so forth are all formal parts of larger, visible whole, a cinematic vision. The function of this cinematic vision is ostensibly to engage the viewer at some level. Both Buñuel and the purveyors of torture porn seek to shock their spectatorship through their respective displays of mutilation, murder, and eroticism (sometimes misogynist, sometimes not). Several commentators have noted this lineage already (Johnson, 2004; Jones, 2004; Rabalska, 2004). But the shocks of torture porn hinge on an ability to surprise the spectator by expanding the limits of imagined brutality. The shocks of Buñuel's violence have little to do with gruesome realism (they are completely sanitized in comparison) and everything to do with context. Montage, what Buñuel called the "golden key of film," is what makes the violent outbursts of Buñuel's cinema so shocking (Buñuel, 2000: 183). The violence is random, self-justifying, and, like Buñuel's call to murder, an expression of absolute freedom.

Notes

1 The phenomenon is not limited to the United States, as worldwide box-office sales indicate. To date, the first installment of *Saw* has grossed over US$102 million worldwide while the first installment of *Hostel* has grossed over US$85 million. See www.imdb.com

2 Specifically, Eli Roth has used the pornographic term "money shot" (which indicates an image of climax, which is usually that of male ejaculation) to refer to moments of extreme violence and nudity in his films. Referring to the faux trailer, "Thanksgiving," he is quoted as saying: "Shooting the trailer was so much fun," Roth says, "because every shot is a money shot. Every shot is decapitation or nudity" (Olsen, 2007: s.n.).

3 Denigration of the eye is of course not limited to torture porn. Martin Jay offers several examples in *Downcast Eyes* (1994). One need only think of *A Clockwork Orange* (1971) or the recent *Simpsons Movie* (2007) in which there is an eye being gouged out and a video game in which babies are gunned down for points.

4 His introduction to the film script reads in part: "… au fond, n'est qu'un désespéré, un passionné appel au muertre" (at the core, it was a desperate, passionate call to murder) (Buñuel, 1929).

5 Buñuel, along with Dalí, disdained melodrama, as evidenced in his own film *ouevre*. In one early review of Victor Fleming's *The Way of All Flesh* (1927), Buñuel writes that the film is "saturado de gérmenes melodramáticos, totalmente infectado de tifus sentimental mezclado con bacilos románticos y naturalistas" (saturated with melodramatic germs, completely infected with sentimental typhus mixed with romantic and naturalist bacteria) (Buñuel, 2000: 181).

6 "El mecanismo productor de imagines cinematográficas, por su manera de funcionar, es, entre todos los medios de expresión humana, el que más se parece al de la mente del hombre, o mejor aún, el que mejor imita el funcionamiento de la mente en estado de sueño" (The production mechanism of cinematographic images, because of the way in which it functions, is, among all the other forms of human expression, the one that most resembles the mind of man, or better yet, the one that best imitates the mind in a state of dreaming) (Buñuel, 2000: 67).

7 In spite of Buñuel's well-known claim that the film has no symbols, it is in fact loaded with them. The putrifying donkeys, for example, are a direct – that is, symbolic – reference to bourgeois society and an inside joke among Dalí, Buñuel, Pepín Bello, and other friends and artists associated with their student years at the Residencia de Estudiantes in Madrid (Sánchez Vidal, 1986: 82–118, 240–254).

8 Some distinctions may be made between subgenres of horror. The splatter film, for example, contains many of the plot elements of a horror film while placing a heavy emphasis on gore through special effects. Early examples include *Dawn of the Dead* (George Romero, 1981) and *I Spit on Your Grave* (Meir Zarchi, 1978). A slasher film, for its part, is distinguished by several features, such as a tendency to portray a psychopathic male killer (who is often masked) with a host of young, attractive (and occasionally nude) female victims. The heroine is often a virtuous and strong woman who outlasts everyone else and must face the killer herself. The heyday of slasher films occurred in the 1980s, with films such as *Halloween* (John Carpenter, 1978), *Prom Night* (Paul Lynch, 1980), and *My Bloody Valentine* (George Mihalka, 1981), to name only a few. Carol Clover has identified several of these as "rape-revenge" films in which the female heroine achieves revenge for misogynistic violence (1992). There is much crossover between subgenres. *I Spit on Your Grave*, for example, shares many of the same general plot lines of the slasher film as well as Clover's "rape-revenge" film. It is, however, splatter film that seems to have the most family resemblance to torture porn.

9 See Dalí's *Saint Sebastian* (Dalí, 1998: 3–8).

10 In the same essay Smith goes on to nuance Buñuel's "surface sexism" (1995: 26).

11 *Hellbent* (Paul Etheredge, 2005) would be an exception.

12 On a historical note, for example, Prince notes that *Bonnie and Clyde* and *The Wild Bunch* both "gained a significant measure of respect and critical stature that helped legitimize the in-your-face bloodletting that otherwise made them so notorious," adding that, "Penn and Peckinpah were both radical social critics, disturbed by the corruptions of American in its Vietnam years" (Prince, 2000: 13).

13 Here I am including later films such as *Los olvidados* (The Forgotten Ones, aka The Young and The Damned 1950), *La Voie lactée* (The Milky Way, 1969), *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* (The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie, 1972), *Le Fantôme de la liberté* (The Phantom of Liberty, 1974).

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28

Inside/Outside

Space and Sexual Behavior in *Belle de jour* and *La Pianiste*

Jimmy Hay

"Pierre, please, don't let the cats out!" cries Séverine (Catherine Deneuve) in Luis Buñuel's *Belle de jour* (1967). The fear of exterior space that Séverine projects is not just for the sake of her pets, however, for the film itself is structured upon a juxtaposition of exterior and interior spaces that points to a consideration of the manner in which transgressive sexual behavior may be equated with the traversal and occupation of space as a way of breaching social and gender boundaries. This approach differs deliberately from the more common reading of the film – and particularly the film's protagonist Séverine – in psychoanalytical terms. Indeed the film's exploration of female subjectivity and desire, its allusions to childhood trauma being the cause of perverse sexual behavior in adult life, and its fetishization of the female body and inanimate objects certainly encourage a psychoanalytical approach. However, this chapter explores the stylistic portrayal of interior spaces in *Belle de jour* and argues that this is integral to illustrating and emphasizing Séverine's internal emotions and desires, that ultimately manifest themselves in masochistic engagements. Through a consideration of Gilles Deleuze's theories on masochism – notably his writings on the masochistic "contract" and the masochist's fixation upon frozenness (Deleuze, 1989) – this chapter explores the relationship between space and sexually transgressive behavior in *Belle de jour*, by considering what role outside space, in contrast to inside space, plays in portraying Séverine's sexual activities as attempts to transcend claustrophobic physical and social boundaries. Moreover, by considering Henri Lefebvre's theory of social space being a constructed, produced entity (Lefebvre, 1991), this analysis reveals how *Belle de jour* subverts and challenges the class, social status, and gender of certain spaces through sexual acts and behavior. Furthermore, this chapter identifies

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the legacy of Buñuel's treatment of the bourgeoisie and sexuality in contemporary European cinema, by effecting a comparative analysis of *Belle de jour* and Michael Haneke's *La Pianiste* (The Piano Teacher, 2001) – an intriguing companion to *Belle de Jour* with regard to its treatment of space and sexual behavior. Both films explore the lives of female characters who live within a bourgeois social stratum and appear to yearn for escape from what should ostensibly be affluent, untroubled existences but in reality are, for various reasons, claustrophobic and imprisoning. As stated, most critical readings of *Belle de jour* offer Freudian interpretations of the film and such details as the ornamental box whose content is never revealed. Andrea Sabbadini, for example, comments on the ornamental box as a fetishistic object and in particular on its relevance as an Oriental object, thereby recalling Freud's example – in his essay "Fetishism" – of "the Chinese custom of mutilating the female foot and then revering it" (Freud, in Sabbadini, 2004: 121). Sabbadini also notes at length the relevance of voyeurism to an understanding of *Belle de jour*, in the prevalence of dark sunglasses worn by Séverine, Pierre, and Husson, and most overtly in Séverine's spying upon Renée and the gynecologist as they enact his pre-prepared masochistic role play (Sabbadini, 2004: 122). Moreover, Sabbadini concurs with Peter William Evans in positing a psychoanalytical reading of Séverine's sexual behavior in the film, namely it being the result of an early traumatic experience in which a young Séverine is molested by a tradesman. Evans explores this element of the film in detail, noting that:

> The experiences of childhood have retarded her in a way that, additionally, forces her to seek sexual fulfilment not through the mild-mannered, civilized approaches of a husband like Pierre, but in the form she has ever since that moment in childhood identified with roughness, brutality, and proletarian modes and contexts of behaviour. (Evans, 1995: 165)

Furthermore, Evans reads Séverine's unwillingness to engage sexually with Pierre – and her subsequent desire for extramarital sexual encounters at Madame Anaïs's brothel – as Freudian frigidity, a fear that to instigate "sexual relations with her husband would eventually undermine the very status and authority that another part of her, socialized bourgeoise, also needs" (Evans, 1995: 166). Ultimately then, Evans locates Séverine's behavior as being explicitly routed in the psychological trauma she receives as a child, and in her desire not to disrupt her role within the social order as a loving, but ultimately desexualized, bourgeois wife.

While informed by these texts, this chapter moves deliberately away from a psychoanalytical reading of *Belle de jour* in order to reconsider female sexuality in the film as existing in direct relation to the interior and exterior spaces that characters, in particular Séverine, occupy. Instead of a Freudian reading, then, it examines the way that physically confining interior spaces characterize and delineate Séverine's existence, arguing that Séverine's engagement in transgressive sexual behavior – sexual behavior that exists outside the monogamous, subservient

boundaries of traditional patriarchy – can be read not simply as a condition of childhood trauma in the Freudian sense, but also as an attempt to escape, however temporarily, the restrictive physical and social boundaries of her bourgeois existence. For example, at respectful variance with Evans's suggestion that "the film never doubts Séverine's desire to remain locked inside the bourgeois order" (Evans, 1995: 154), this chapter offers an alternative reading in which Séverine's visits to Madame Anaïs's brothel constitute an active attempt on her part to traverse social and sexual boundaries in lieu of being able to escape the physical boundaries of her upper-middle-class existence that are evidenced throughout the film by Buñuel's claustrophobic *mise en scène*. The manner in which Séverine's traversal of space is thus aligned with her sexual behavior, it is argued, positions Séverine's engagements at the brothel as attempts to regain subjectivity and independence.

Don't Box Me In: Confining Interior Space

In both *Belle de jour* and *La Pianiste*, the manner in which interior space is presented, through *mise en scène* and framing, is integral to portraying the emotional state and inner desires of the two protagonists, and many similarities are present in their respective stylistic portrayal of inside space. The first scene in *Belle de jour* highlights immediately the claustrophobic and entrapping nature of Séverine's life through its sophisticated use of framing. The *mise en scène* of the sequence provides significant early insight into Séverine's internal thoughts, repressed desires, and feelings of claustrophobic confinement. The sequence opens with Séverine lying in bed, having just awoken from a daydream, while Pierre (Jean Sorel) readies himself for bed in the en-suite bathroom. Pierre is framed from behind and Séverine, sat upright in bed, is reflected in the bathroom mirror (Figure 28.1). The capturing nature of the reflection – in its confinement of the subject within the borders of the mirror – instantly connotes a sense of entrapment for Séverine, which is further emphasized by the highly restrictive framing of the shot, adopting multiple frames-within-frames. The door frame, the dark bedspread, the top of the mirror and the reflection of the door frame all form a small square frame within the right third of the shot within which Séverine is confined. Furthermore, while the four borders of the mirror are not all visible, she is nevertheless captured within them, and is then framed for a third time by the four sides of the camera frame. As Pierre moves across to his bed, the camera follows to reveal the bedroom's light-colored walls, white pillows, and white sheets. These are complimented by Pierre's white pajamas and Séverine's light-pink nightgown, which creates an aesthetic of clinical sterility; more akin, perhaps, to the hospital wards in which Pierre works as a surgeon than a marital bedroom. This aesthetic, coupled with the fact that Pierre and Séverine, despite being newly-weds, sleep in separate beds, serves to compound Buñuel's portrayal of an almost entirely sexless marriage.



Figure 28.1 Buñuel's claustrophobic framing in *Belle de jour*. Robert and Raymond Hakim, Paris Film Productions and Five Film.

Séverine's sexually detached relationship with Pierre is stylistically implied further in the following scene at the ski resort. Evans has noted of the contrast between this scene and the former that the literal coldness of the ski resort acts as a metaphor for the "cold and frosty nature of Séverine and Pierre's love life" (Evans, 2006), as signaled by the aesthetic of the former bedroom scene. This reading of the juxtaposition between the two scenes is emphasized further by Séverine's clothes. She wears walking boots, black leggings, a thick jumper, a warm head scarf, gloves and sunglasses that, whilst highlighting the cold temperature, serve more to present Séverine as being entirely covered and impenetrable, symbolizing the sexual defense she has erected between herself and Pierre. The physical boundary of the clothes marks Séverine's body as being inaccessible. The location of a ski resort is also significant due to its connotations, particularly in the 1960s, of wealth and bourgeois holidaymakers, encouraging the suggestion that Séverine's dissatisfaction and claustrophobia stems as much from class and social trappings as sexual deficiencies.

In a later sequence, in which Séverine and Pierre are sitting in the study of their apartment, the *mise en scène* once again provides evidence of Séverine's feelings of confinement and dissatisfaction. Séverine sits with her back to the camera in a very wide, dark-brown wing-back chair that fills half of the lower third of the screen. In the center of the frame at the back of the room are two heavy curtains flanking a net curtain, the color of which closely resembles the far wall and thus all but removes the appearance of a window, and with it any evidence of outside space. Moreover, the substantial amount of furniture in the room creates a highly cluttered and claustrophobic interior space that is exaggerated even further when Séverine moves to sit

in the chair next to Pierre's desk and both characters appear to be almost swallowed up by the room and its paraphernalia. Like Douglas Sirk and Max Ophüls before him, Buñuel uses furniture, lamps, and heavy curtains – that are all synonymous with a wealthy, bourgeois existence – in order to create a highly symbolic *mise en scène*. Thus just as Cary's imposing new television, multi-framed windows, and dark interiors serve to express how the pressures and expectations of middle-class suburbia have left her claustrophobic and trapped in *All That Heaven Allows* (Douglas Sirk, 1955), Séverine's existence as bourgeois wife to a bourgeois surgeon is revealed, stylistically, to be responsible for her feelings of isolation and confinement.

In a strikingly similar fashion to *Belle de jour*'s treatment of interior space, *La Pianiste* utilizes locations, framing, and *mise en scène* that all serve to illustrate the sense of confinement and restriction that the film's protagonist, Erika (Isabelle Huppert), feels. Like Séverine in *Belle de jour*, Erika lives in what appears to be a fairly affluent, bourgeois, city apartment, but in contrast to Séverine, Erika shares her apartment with her mother. The nature of Erika's relationship with her mother in *La Pianiste* has encouraged numerous readings of the film, and of Erika's repression, in psychoanalytical terms – readings encouraged no doubt by the film's setting of Vienna, the birthplace of psychoanalysis. John Champagne, for example, notes that "Erika's mother appears to represent the (phallic) Lacanian pre-Oedipal mother, the mother who is both adored and feared by the child because of the child's dependence on her and its closeness to her body" (Champagne, 2002), while Jean Wyatt contends that Erika "lives in a world of maternal jouissance: her mother (Annie Girardot) operates as if there were no law or limit regulating a mother's possession of her child and her rights to that child's body and will" (Wyatt, 2005: 453). This approach to Erika's repression and behavior in the film is valid, and indeed informs part of the following analysis, but nonetheless the manner in which Erika traverses (or attempts to traverse) different spaces in *La Pianiste* encourages a consideration of Erika's bourgeois social status – and not merely a Freudian assessment of the relationship with her mother – as a defining factor in her engagements in transgressive sexual acts.

Erika's claustrophobic existence is illustrated through Haneke's use of tight, constrictive framing in almost all shots occurring within her apartment, as well as the light-sapping brown and dark beige interiors, and the absence of any natural light. The first shot of the film reveals Erika entering through the heavy front door of her apartment into a dark entrance room. The camera remains fixed in a medium close-up on Erika, not revealing any space in the apartment besides that which Erika occupies, which along with the engulfing nature of the darkness in the room immediately invokes a sense of physical claustrophobia. The aforementioned Mother (Annie Girardot) appears suddenly from an off-screen position to the left of the frame and begins a dictatorial interrogation of Erika's whereabouts. The mother's freedom of movement across the boundary dividing off-screen and on-screen space signals the apartment as *her* realm, in which she enjoys unhindered movement and control. In contrast, Erika's entrance into the apartment is

doubly framed in a claustrophobic fashion by the doorway through which she enters, and the camera frame itself, which continues to follow her. As well as the physical confinement of the apartment, Erika's mother's forced entry into Erika's handbag and removal of the dress she has bought represents the control that the mother holds over Erika's internal space, with the handbag acting as a "synecdoche for Erika's body" (Wyatt, 2005: 456) which Erika's mother freely invades.

Wanting Out: Desire for Sexual Perversion as a Means of Release

Transgressive sexual behavior, and more specifically masochism, is an integral theme of *Belle de jour*. Moreover, it is inextricably linked to outside space. The pursuit of, and engagement in, transgressive sexual behavior by Séverine acts as a means of escape from her confining bourgeois existence, through the act of rejecting and breaking through social and ideological boundaries regarding sex. The same relationship between sexual behavior and space is also central to a reading of *La Pianiste*. By establishing a dichotomy between confining inside space and liberating outside space, both films suggest that transgressive sexual behavior can act as a means of escape, by stylistically associating moments of sexual engagements with exterior space.

The first scene of *Belle de jour* opens, without title sequence or music, with a static long shot of what appears to be the driveway of a country estate. The distance of the shot presents a sense of openness and lack of confinement, while a horse-drawn carriage and the driveway suggest a wealthy, bourgeois setting. The scene cuts to the carriage riding directly toward the camera along a woodland path, the inhabitants of which are Pierre and Séverine. The clothing of the young couple befits the setting already established; Pierre wearing a smart grey suit and Séverine wearing a couture jacket and skirt, the most striking aspect of which is its bright red color. Connotations of sexual passion and danger are instantly evoked by her clothes, but perhaps even more so, the red of her clothing and the woodland setting call to mind the Little Red Riding Hood folk tale which serves to associate Séverine as being vulnerable prey. The same folk tale, it is worth noting, is alluded to in an earlier Buñuel film, *Le Journal d'une femme de chambre* (The Diary of a Chambermaid, 1964), in which the character Little Clare, a young girl, is raped and murdered by the character Joseph as she gathers snails in a basket whilst walking through the forest wearing a skirt and hood. This association is confirmed just moments later as Pierre orders the two coachmen to remove Séverine from the carriage and drag her into the woods, where she is tied by the hands and from the branch of a tree.

The tying up of Séverine, the stripping of her back, and the ripping open of her bra-strap introduces the notion of bondage and sadomasochistic sexual behavior in the film. The ambiguity of her screams as the two coachmen whip her – at once exclamations of pain and sexual pleasure – suggests Séverine's desire for masochistic sexual

relations. This is confirmed as one of the coachmen is instructed to rape Séverine. As he begins kissing the back of her neck, Séverine cocks her head back, bites her lips and closes her eyes in an expression of sexual elation. The fantasy cannot reach its conclusion, however, as Pierre's non-diegetic voice signals a cut to the couple's marital bedroom, providing a juxtaposition between the woodland sequence and the following aforementioned bedroom scene, thus presenting the dichotomies of outside space and inside space, sexual activity and confinement, that permeates the film.

Through his portrayal as a character representative of masochism, the character of Husson (Michel Piccoli) in *Belle de jour* is an integral influence on Séverine's eventual pursuit and engagement in masochistic relations. In the early ski resort scene, for example, his positioning in relation to Séverine offers up evidence of her internal desire for masochistic sexual relations. Furthermore, it anticipates the role that Husson will play in her visiting Madame Anaïs's brothel later in the film. As Husson and Renée sit together at a table, an association is instantly made between Husson and sadomasochistic relations as he comments, when he kisses her hand and looks at her wrist, "Your scars heal wonderfully!" suggesting a previous sexual act between them involving bondage or restraint, while later in the scene he comments, as two attractive young women walk past the table, "What punishments I am missing!" As Séverine and Pierre arrive at the table, Husson's movement to another chair forces them to sit either side of him. Séverine and Husson now sit side by side, framed by Pierre and Renée and facing the camera, and thus the importance of their relationship is visually highlighted (Figure 28.2). Despite her evident dislike of Husson, Séverine has her hair down when sitting next to him and

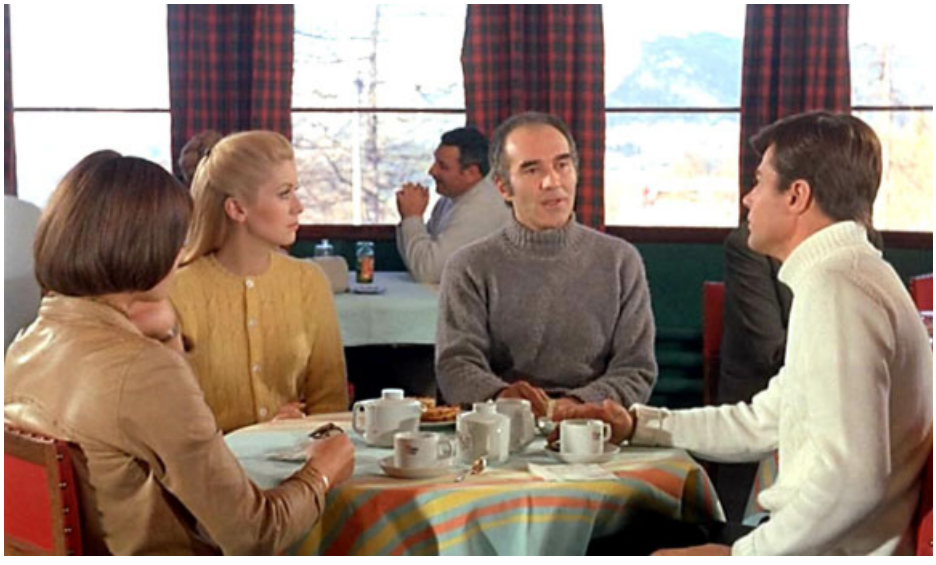


Figure 28.2 Séverine and Husson framed by Pierre and Renée in *Belle de jour*. Robert and Raymond Hakim, Paris Film Productions and Five Film.

has removed her smothering jumper, her gloves, sunglasses, and woolly headscarf. Her appearance is subsequently more feminine when in Husson's presence than in the previous sequence when she was with Pierre. Moreover, she has removed the physical boundaries of her clothing and with it her inaccessibility. This display of femininity in Husson's presence provides additional evidence for Séverine desiring masochistic sexual relations with an experienced and dominant partner.

Husson's increasing effect on Séverine is evident in the following Parisian scene, as she drops a vase of bright red flowers that Husson has sent her, releasing the flowers and the water over the floor of her apartment. Clearly troubled by the gift, Séverine walks with a near-frozen, expressionless face to the bathroom and examines herself in the mirror, before accidentally knocking a bottle of perfume off the counter, spilling its content in the process. These two spillages portray a sudden, shattering release of liquid from containers, serving to represent Séverine's doubts about her marriage and her desires for socially transgressive sexual relations threatening to spill out at any moment. Furthermore, the two spillages also represent the very notion of confinement and release, of inside and outside; the perfume is confined within the bottle, but at Séverine's contemplation of Husson – and thus transgressive sexual acts – it is released into an outside space. The spilling liquid also carries deeply sexual connotations, as the release of the liquid can be read symbolically as representing female ejaculation. The dichotomy of inside and outside presented by these containers thus suggests that Séverine's escape, from confining interior spaces to unrestricted outside spaces, is dependent on her traversing social and sexual norms through transgressive sexual behavior.

Like *Belle de jour*, Erika's engagement in masochistic sexual behavior as a means of escape is revealed early on in *La Pianiste*. In a now often-cited scene, early in the film Erika locks herself in the dark-tiled bathroom of her and her mother's apartment, and cuts her genitalia with a razor blade. Her methodical and ritualistic manner, which at no point suggests any sense of hesitation, surprise, or uncertainty about what she is doing, suggests that it is a regular occurrence, one in which she is well practiced. The bathroom is relatively small, and with its dark tiles displays a similar aesthetic to the other physically claustrophobic rooms in the apartment. Having been portrayed as a highly oppressed and trapped figure, the act of self-harming – and the manner in which she does so – suggests the act to be a means by which Erika frequently attempts to momentarily escape the exterior pressures on her through the pain and release of bodily fluid that occurs as she cuts herself. The very real release of blood from the body mirrors the release that Erika wants from her confined life. This release is further implied by the fact that the act is socially transgressive, in that it is, as Jean Wyatt has commented, an "expression of sexuality foreign to the normative erogenous zones, outside social bounds, and self-damaging" (2005: 9). By engaging in a sexual act that exists "outside social bounds," Erika is attempting to position herself outside of the social and ideological boundaries within which she feels trapped. Just as with Séverine in *Belle de jour*, Erika's engagement in transgressive forms of sexual expression are an attempt to

escape the confines and boundaries of her oppressive internal spaces, and the social constraints of her bourgeois existence. Both Erika and Séverine are unable to actively remove themselves from the social order within which they live – such is their ingrained existence within it – and so engagement in sexual acts that exist outside of monogamous, patriarchal boundaries becomes a substitute traversal that they can effect with their own, individual actions.

The static and entrapped nature of Erika's existence in *La Pianiste* is further highlighted by Huppert's performance, namely through her consistent motionlessness and almost frozen facial expressions that reveals a further striking affinity with *Belle de jour*, as the same expressionless performance style is utilized throughout the film by Deneuve. While supporting the representation of a static and claustrophobic existence, Deneuve's inexpressiveness, just as Huppert's, also serves to illustrate her character's desire for masochistic sexual engagements as it conforms to "the Deleuzian masochist's obsession with frozenness, a fixation upon fixation" (Reader, 2008: 153). There is a consistency in *Belle de jour* of these blank facial expressions and frozen postures occurring during moments of submissive sexual engagements, such as Séverine's motionless body and face as she lies on the bed in Madame Anaïs's brothel, having been struck and physically dominated by Monsieur Adolphe. In adopting these facial expressions at such points in the film, Séverine, like Erika, recalls the masochistic characteristic of frozenness as posited by Gilles Deleuze, from his writings on the works of Sacher-Masoch, in which he states that "the scenes in Masoch have of necessity a frozen quality, like statues or portraits" (Deleuze, 1989: 69). The character of Husson further implies the "frozen quality" of masochistic scenes in *Belle de Jour* as he visits Anaïs's brothel late in the film and comments that "Nothing has changed, Anaïs, still the same warm welcome, still the same curtains," suggesting that "the brothel is in fact a freeze-frame of time" (Evans, 1995: 161). That these moments of motionlessness often occur during engagement, or contemplation of, submissive sexual behavior, affirms Deleuze's assertion of this characteristic being synonymous with the masochist.

Go and Play Outside: Outside Space, Sexual Perversion, and Freedom

While *Belle de jour* ostensibly takes place entirely in Paris, there are numerous shots in the film that occur in outside, rural, countryside locations. These scenes are all fantasies, however, taking place within Séverine's mind. Without exception, Séverine's daydreams involve her being the subject of some form of masochistic sexual experience – sexual engagements that belie her aforementioned role as a desexualized, near-virginal bourgeois wife. Séverine's repeated sexual fantasies in these outside spaces can then be interpreted as not simply a desire to be dominated sexually because of a general dissatisfaction with her husband, but rather as a means to

move from the claustrophobic interiors of her existence within the social order to borderless outside spaces through the traversal of social barriers by engaging in transgressive sexual behavior. The narrative progression of the film affirms this interpretation, as once Séverine's feelings of confinement become too great she attempts to convert these fantasies into reality by taking the day job at Madame Anaïs's brothel.

A clear example of the manner in which *Belle de jour* links outside space to moments, or contemplations, of transgressive sexual activity is seen as Séverine first visits the brothel. Séverine approaches the large double doors that lead to Anaïs's apartment wearing a black, military-style jacket. The style of the jacket, with its heavy, dark material and its large buttons, fully done up to the neck, signals a sense of defensiveness; an attempt to protect herself that reveals her reservations and further illustrates Séverine's use of clothing as a physical boundary. Séverine turns away from the building as she sees the disheveled and sexualized Mathilde approaching and entering the building. The sequence then cuts to Séverine walking along a rural driveway in front of a grand country mansion, possibly the same driveway as in the film's opening scene. She walks through a line of trees and autumnal leaf-fall and sits on a bench, seemingly deep in contemplation. The film then cuts back to Madame Anaïs's building and a close-up of Séverine entering the front door. Her decision, then, to enter Madame Anaïs's building to satisfy her internal sexual desires, against her initial cautious judgment, is arrived at only after visiting an outside locale resembling that of her rape-fantasy in the opening scene. Furthermore, the use of medium close-up as she approaches the exterior door presents Séverine, whose presence fills the frame, as the dominant figure in relation to the building she is entering. This serves as a stark contrast to an earlier external shot of her apartment building, in which the low angle of the shot and the framing of Séverine on the lower periphery of the screen positions her as an inferior figure to the imposing building. The dominant position afforded to Séverine by this close-up thus illustrates the beginning of Séverine's transition from the confines of her domestic realm to an attainment of an independent subjectivity in a space that, in contrast to her apartment, is revealed to be a far less claustrophobic and restrictive environment. Moreover, as Séverine reaches the top of Anaïs's staircase, the camera zooms in to an extreme close-up of Séverine's face, before cutting to a flashback of Séverine as a small child, in which she refuses to eat a disk of bread at communion. This refusal of the priest's request for her to open her mouth represents the disobeying of an authority figure and furthermore the rejection of an institution synonymous with values of moral Manichaeism, of marital fidelity and of patriarchal dominance. The positioning of the flashback at this point in the film serves to emphasize the threshold across which Séverine is stepping by entering Madame Anaïs's apartment: she is transgressing the boundaries of bourgeois social and ideological protocol.

In its use of outside space as a physical location, *La Pianiste* differs considerably from *Belle de jour*, as it is an almost entirely interior film. However, just as *Belle de jour*

inextricably links transgressive sexual activity to outside space, and thus to freedom and escape, *La Pianiste* utilizes a recurring dichotomy between darkness and light, with darkness representing restrictive, confining interior space, and light representing outside space and a sense of freedom and liberation. This dichotomy acts as an integral aesthetic in portraying Erika's attempted engagements in socially transgressive sexual behavior as being linked to the traversal of restrictive inside space.

Throughout *La Pianiste*, Erika's confined, interior existence is symbolized by darkness. She is either positioned in dark spaces – such as the interior of her apartment – or seen moving toward dark spaces – such as her movement away from the bright glass doors toward the dark interior of the entrance hall of the Klemmers' apartment building. Prominent in all of the scenes within Erika's piano studio – a double-doored, hermetically sealed room – is the large window through which a flood of seemingly over-exposed, bright white light is always present, providing a striking light/dark contrast. One considerably long take inside Erika's studio frames her from behind, in a mid-length static shot, as she stands staring out of the window. There is no movement in the shot and the only audible noise is that of the traffic outside. The contrast between dark and light is highlighted by both Erika's dark clothing, and by the large, black grand piano that fills the entire lower half of the frame. The dominating presence of the piano emphasizes the restrictive nature of the inside space of the studio, which throughout the film is shown to be as much a space of entrapment as her apartment. Indeed, it also alludes to the restrictive nature of Erika's profession; her instrument of creative expression is shown to be an anchor, a symbol of suffocating entrapment. Thus the outside space represented by the bright white light of the window, in its stark opposition to the darkness of the piano, of Erika's clothes, and of the representation of Erika's apartment, is presented as being symbolic of freedom and liberation. As the film unfolds, Erika's pursuit of this liberation will, as in *Belle de jour*, manifest itself in her engagement in transgressive sexual acts.

The correlation between this sexual behavior and escape from a confined, interior existence is portrayed by Erika's first sexual experience with Walter in the Conservatory bathroom. In the bathroom, the same bright, overexposed light is used, through another large and prominent window, filling almost the entirety of the far wall. Whereas in Erika's studio the light is contrasted with the domineering black piano – creating a dichotomy of dark/light, and thus inside/outside – in this scene the bright external light is aligned with the whiteness of the tiles, walls, toilet cubicles and ceiling of the bathroom. By establishing this visual association, the whiteness of the bathroom becomes representative of outside space. Erika's performance of fellatio on Walter in the bathroom is thus associated with unrestrictive outside space, illustrating how her sexual relationship with him is allowing her to begin her traversal of the physical and social boundaries that confine her in her almost entirely interior everyday life. The framing of the sex act emphasizes the independence that Erika has begun to attain, as for the first time in the film Erika is positioned in an off-screen position. As she kneels in front of him, the camera

remains fixed upon Walter in a mid-length shot, and excludes all but a fraction of Erika's head at the bottom of the frame. She is thus no longer trapped by the framing of the camera; she has attained a freedom from the frame that until this point in the film she had been denied.

Inside and Outside: The Transition to Outside Space

Having established the desire for transgressive sexual relations as being the means by which Séverine and Erika see their respective escapes from a life of claustrophobic confinement, both films continue and indeed increase this association further as their protagonists start to actively engage in such acts. In doing so, they compound the connection between masochistic actions and an escape from the boundaries of interior space.

Séverine realizes her internal masochistic desires for the first time with her first client at Madame Anaïs's, Monsieur Adolphe. After losing patience with her frigidity toward him, he slaps her across the face and throws her to the bed, at which point Séverine lies motionless and concedes to his advances. At this ceasing to struggle, Adolphe comments "So … it's rough stuff you need is it?," complementing Anaïs's earlier comment, "What you need is a firm hand!" Séverine's need to be dominated sexually is further suggested by her inability to assume the position of dominatrix with the gynecologist, Professor Henri. Séverine's full attainment of a sexual experience of the kind she desires, however, does not occur until she is introduced to the physically imposing Korean businessman. Her at-ease demeanor in this scene – giggling, throwing her arms around the man, wearing her hair down and disheveled in the style of Mathilde – signals the loss of her previously staunch inhibitions, and anticipates the mental, if not physical, loss of virginity she is soon to experience. We are introduced to the Korean man as he is showing Mathilde the content of the aforementioned ornamental box. The box, irrespective of its unseen content, is highly relevant as it represents a confined, inside space and a released, outside space. In representing this dichotomy, it serves a similar role to the spilled perfume bottle earlier in the film. Mathilde appears both repulsed and disinterested in the contents of the box, yet when he shows it to Séverine she takes a great interest, examining the unseen content for some time. Like the vase of roses and the perfume bottle before, the open box portrays a sense of release and transgression of boundaries that Séverine attempts to attain through her work at the brothel.

As the Korean man gets undressed, he raises both of his arms and flexes his biceps in a display of masculine strength and dominance. Séverine fulfills her role as submissive female in this exchange by admiringly stroking his chest. As she does so, he also rings a small bell held in his left hand that produces the same sound as the bells of the horse and carriage in the opening scene of the film. The sexual encounter about to take place is thus explicitly associated with both Séverine's

fantasies of masochistic treatment and the outside space within which these fantasies take place. An ellipsis reveals, via gradual fade-in, the bedroom in disarray, with the bed sheets cast across the room, lamps tipped over, furniture on its side and ornaments knocked over – all suggesting that a struggle or some form of violent sexual activity has taken place. This suggestion is further emphasized by a bloodstain on a towel, discarded on the floor. Séverine is seen lying face down at the end of the bed, her body position and the appearance of the room causing the maid, and the audience, to assume her to be either unconscious or shielding her face from the trauma of what has occurred. Séverine promptly lifts her head and upper body to reveal a look of euphoric pleasure, however, signaling the sexual awakening and attainment of real sexual pleasure that has occurred. The bloodstain is now a signal of this loss-of-virginity moment, which has been portrayed as attainable only through rough, submissive sex with a strong, dominant partner. This moment marks a defining point in Séverine's sexual development and is attached once more to outside space as she once again slips seamlessly from her exterior reality of interior spaces into her interior fantasies of exterior spaces. The scene cuts from Séverine's face to another country-estate driveway (again, possibly the same one as in the opening scene, this never explicitly confirmed or denied), along which drives a horse-drawn carriage with what appear to be the same coachmen as abuse Séverine in the film's opening scene. As is the case in *La Pianiste*, Séverine's successful engagement in a transgressive sexual act is overtly linked to outside space, thus affirming her work at the brothel as an attempt to find freedom and release from the claustrophobic interiors of her everyday existence. In *La Pianiste*, the culmination of Erika's entry into the outside space represented by bright white light occurs immediately after her engagement in masochistic sexual activity with Walter at the ice rink. The ice rink is explicitly coded as being a male space when the male hockey team, wearing hockey pads, clothing, and helmets that serve to exaggerate their imposing masculinity, chase two young female figure skaters off the ice. By establishing the space as male, Erika's desire for masochistic submission is emphasized by her willing entry into this machismo environment to offer herself to Walter. A high-angle shot of Erika lying on the kit-room tiles, arms outstretched toward the standing Walter, emphasizes her submissive position to him. After convincing him to position himself on top of her so that she can perform fellatio on him, Erika subsequently vomits, suggesting an intense release and catharsis that she experiences at attaining the masochistic sexual experience she has desired, as well as a further explicit display of release from inside to outside. The inside/outside dichotomy is further developed as Erika opens the double doors of the kit room and stumbles out on to the overexposed, bright white ice. As she steps out the camera moves forward until the entire frame is filled by the blindingly white ice, the same light that has been coded to represent freedom and liberation. As Erika's figure moves tentatively across it, the brightness of the ice suggests a "divine transcendence" (Davies, 2003) as it blurs the edges of her light-colored overcoat (in contrast to her predominantly black and dark-brown attire

earlier in the film) and gives the impression of her being engulfed and consumed by the light. She has, through her sexual transgressions with Walter, successfully gained entry into the outside space she has craved.

Reclaiming Space: *Belle de jour*, *La Pianiste*, and Henri Lefebvre

As this chapter has established, both *Belle de jour* and *La Pianiste* delineate a clear relationship between space and sexual behavior, and conceive socially transgressive sexual activity – in particular engagement in masochism – as a means of escape from the confines of a socially and physically restrictive bourgeois existence. Further appreciation of this relationship can be attained by considering the manner in which both films – in yet another striking similarity – subvert the constructed values of certain spaces. Henri Lefebvre conceptualizes in *The Production of Space* that social space is a product, a product that is constructed by and for different social groups, and is based on the differing values of these groups. As a result, the physical construction and social perception of these spaces will be heavily affected by the social, political, or ideological values integral to their production. Approaching the production of social space from a Marxist standpoint, Lefebvre asserts that the "*ideologically* dominant tendency divides space up into parts and parcels in accordance with the social divisions of labour" (Lefebvre, 1991: 89, emphasis in original). This is pertinent to a reading of Séverine's apartment, for example, as its imposing and dominant presence complements its status as an upper-class, bourgeois residence. By applying his theory to a reading of *Belle de jour*, and in particular to Madame Anaïs's brothel, Séverine's actions can be read as subverting the gender and social status of the brothel, in a rejection of bourgeois ideology and thus further traversal of the boundaries attached to these values. Furthermore, Lefebvre's theory can be applied to *La Pianiste* by considering the manner in which Erika subverts and reclaims the gendered spaces that she enters and occupies in the film, in particular the ice rink.

In *Belle de jour*, Séverine's apartment is often compartmentalized by focusing on different rooms individually, and as such no perception of the physical layout of the apartment is afforded to the audience. This presents a significant contrast with Madame Anaïs's apartment. In one particular shot at Anaïs's, the camera slowly pulls backward along the corridor of the apartment, revealing the bedrooms' position on either side. As the camera pulls back, Charlotte appears from her room at the end to request an ink pot for Professor Henri's role-play, Pallas then appears from another room in which she is cleaning in preparation for another client, before Anaïs finally appears from her living area from an off-screen position behind the camera. In capturing the centrality of the corridor, and the positioning of the bedrooms all leading off what can be seen as the spine of the apartment, the shot

emphasizes the practicality of the space for its role as a brothel, with Madame Anaïs positioned at the head of the corridor, privileging her position as owner and overseer of the space. As such, the physical layout of Anaïs's conforms to Lefebvre's assertion that "each work occupies a space; it also engenders and fashions that space" (1991: 77).

As previously noted, the first shot we see of Madame Anaïs's building is accompanied by a close-up of Mathilde as she arrives for her work at the brothel. Mathilde's appearance – disheveled hair, wrinkled beige overcoat, cigarette, and confident stride – recalls a highly stereotyped image of "the prostitute" and serves as a visual signifier of both her profession and her social status. Mathilde's contrast in appearance to Séverine is considerable, whose couture black jacket, designer shoes and hat, and large black sunglasses indelibly mark her bourgeois social status. The interior decor of Madame Anaïs's brothel, whilst presented as less confining and more comforting than Séverine's apartment, is extremely bare by comparison. There is far less furniture in Anaïs's living space and bedrooms, while the furnishings that are there are of a far less grandiose nature, which signals the significant class difference between the two apartments. Having established the highly visible class divide between both the respective spaces, and between Séverine and Anaïs's girls, Séverine's presence in the brothel – while wearing her various designer costumes – is particularly jarring as she makes no attempt to mask or down-play her significantly higher social status, indeed the film "prioritises her clothes and plays on their exclusivity" (Bruzzi, 1997: 21). In doing so, her engagement in prostitution at the brothel serves as a rejection of the constructed class segregation of the two spaces.

Moreover, Séverine's willing participation in prostitution at Anaïs's, quite apart from the sexual liberation she hopes to attain from working there, subverts patriarchal views on prostitution and the brothel, as exhibited by Husson. Earlier in the film, Husson talks of his fondness for Madame Anaïs's brothel because, as he puts it, "the women are enslaved." As well as revealing once again Husson's penchant for sadomasochistic sexual relations, the notion that the women are enslaved and under his control stems from the fact that they are employed there. Mathilde talks about her inability and disinclination to get a "regular" job, as it wouldn't pay her enough money, and so she is bound by an advanced capitalist society to work at the brothel and be remunerated for it; in short, she is enslaved.[1] Séverine, however, is not bound to the brothel by financial needs, a fact that she flaunts, be it consciously or not, through her clothing. Her time at the brothel is thus a rejection of Husson's patriarchal construction of the brothel as a space in which women are enslaved due to financial hardship. Séverine offers herself up for submissive sexual engagements out of choice, she is active and independent in her pursuit of masochistic sexual relations. Like Erika in *La Pianiste*, Séverine maintains an element of control in her sexual engagements, through her refusal to sleep with Husson when he appears at the brothel, and her forceful chastisement of Marcel when he whips her with a belt. Her picking and choosing of moments to be dominated by male sexual

partners draws similarity with the control that Erika exhibits in *La Pianiste* by informing Walter of what she would like him to do, of forcing him to abstain in the Conservatory bathroom, and by convincing him to participate at the ice rink. Séverine, though less severe and forceful than Erika, illustrates in these aforementioned incidents that she will play the masochistic role of submissive, beaten female, but only on *her* terms, such is the masochist's prerogative.

In *La Pianiste* too, space is subverted by the actions of Erika, most pertinently in the aforementioned scene at the ice rink. As has been discussed, the ice rink where Walter plays hockey is established, by the actions of the male ice-hockey players toward the two female figure skaters, as an overtly masculine space. The behavior of the ice-hockey players toward the female figure skaters also raises notions of forceful sexual domination by males over females in the playing kit of the hockey players that exaggerates their masculinity and the excessive femininity of the figure skaters with their petite frames and figure-hugging leotards. As such, Erika's offering of herself to Walter at the ice rink, even going so far as to enter the male changing room to plead for him to see her, where "the teasing of his team-mates reinforces the masculinity of the space" (Champagne, 2002), would appear to be a completely submissive act. However, the masochistic relationship is not one characterized by an uncontrolled dominant/passive dynamic. The masochist, wishing to be dominated, controlled, punished. and belittled by a sexual partner, is dependent on this treatment for the attainment of sexual pleasure: both Séverine and Erika are the "victim in search of a torturer … who needs to educate, persuade and conclude an alliance with the torturer" (Deleuze, 1989: 20). The masochistic relationship is thus an alliance, an agreement between two parties, a contract proposed by the masochist and agreed to by the willing partner. As such, Erika, as in the bathroom scene with Walter earlier in the film, retains a considerable amount of control during the entire exchange in the ice-rink kit room. She desires to pull down Walter's trousers and he concedes, she desires him to position himself on top of her and he concedes, she desires to perform fellatio on him and he concedes. Despite adopting the role of the submissive sexual partner, Erika maintains control throughout and thus, paradoxically, is the more dominant partner in the exchange. It can thus be asserted that Erika actually subverts the masculine gender of the space, reclaiming the constructed male gender of the space as female, and thus exhibiting herself as a dominant, independent, and not confined, character.

Conclusion

In *Belle de jour*, Séverine is portrayed from the outset as being trapped, restricted, and inhibited through Buñuel's highly expressive *mise en scène* and framing. The enclosed nature of her domestic environment serves to illustrate her internal thoughts and emotions and provides a visual context and stimulus for her desire for

escape. In its portrayal of restrictive interior space and its delineation of a relationship between space and sexual behavior, *Belle de jour* can be identified as a thematic and aesthetic forebear of Michael Haneke's *La Pianiste*. Just as Séverine before her, Erika lives a highly restrictive and confined existence, as represented by Haneke's equally sophisticated use of *mise en scène*, framing, and juxtaposition, and attempts to escape this existence through transgressive sexual behavior. While Erika in *La Pianiste* is ostensibly portrayed as being restricted by her controlling mother, and Séverine's sense of entrapment is in part the result of the sexless nature of her marriage, both characters are most explicitly confined by the controlling ideological values of their bourgeois existences. In an attempt to escape the boundaries of this existence, as represented by claustrophobic interiors, restrictive framing, heavy furnishings, and dark decor, both characters pursue sexual engagements that exist outside the monogamous, subservient boundaries of traditional patriarchy, in order to transgress bourgeois and social taboos regarding sex and female sexuality. The fact that these pursuits constitute attempts to escape the confines of their bourgeois existence is illustrated in both films by the associations they make between sexual activity and outside space, be it the actual portrayal of outside space, such as in *Belle de jour*, or the metaphorical portrayal of outside space, as in *La Pianiste*. Furthermore, through these sexual engagements, both Séverine and Erika subvert, reterritorialize, and reclaim the gender and class of the spaces that they traverse and occupy. While both films encourage and reward psychoanalytical interpretation, and are heavily imbued with explorations of female sexuality, a richer understanding of these films may be attained by a consideration of how their dichotomies of inside and outside space position transgressive sexual behavior as a means for the respective protagonists to at least attempt to regain female subjectivity, independence, and spatial freedom. By viewing the films as such, it can be seen that both *Belle de jour* and *La Pianiste* turn space inside out.

Note

1 A similar representation of prostitution as a metaphor for capitalist enslavement is explored in Jean-Luc Godard's *2 ou 3 Choses que Je Sais D'elle* (Two or Three Things I Know About Her, 1967).

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Surrealist Legacies

The Influence of Luis Buñuel's "Irrationality" on Hiroshi Teshigahara's "Documentary-fantasy"

Felicity Gee

Luis Buñuel advocated a new realism in cinema, a new and unconventional way of seeing the everyday world that was both socially critical and marvelous and irrational. His definition of cinematic reality adopts a surrealist view that considers the exterior object world as an expansive, psychologically invested space in which an object as simple as an ordinary glass "can be a thousand different things" (Buñuel, 1995: 140). His vivid cinematic translations of impoverished social conditions in rural Spain and Latin America were to have a lasting impact on many subsequent filmmakers, one of whom was Japanese director Hiroshi Teshigahara. Through an examination of Buñuel's *Los olvidados* (The Forgotten Ones, aka The Young and the Damned, 1950), this chapter explores how common themes and stylistic innovations can be traced in Teshigahara's "fantasy-documentary" *Otoshiana* (Pitfall, 1962). It examines how each director's consideration of a "usable" historical past is built from stark images of the mundane and quotidian, and metamorphoses into strange and magical cinematic worlds that are synchronously real and surreal. Focusing on themes of contingency, irrationality, and sociopolitical violence, this analysis demonstrates how in both Buñuel and Teshigahara's work, an unresolved tension persists that is rooted in both surrealist practice and its contemporary, the elusive and migratory mode of magic realism.

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Fredric Jameson's Cinematic Magic Realism

To date only Fredric Jameson's full-length analysis investigating both the sociopolitical *and* the aesthetic elements of the cinematic mode of magic realism has been attempted. Somewhat overshadowed by his oft-cited theorization of postmodernism, Jameson's two articles address a mode of filmmaking that borders his own categorizations of modern and postmodern art: "On Magic Realism in Film" (1986) and "Soviet Magic Realism" (1992). These essays are highly subjective, based on the North American Marxist's own recollections of films that cast a "visual spell" (Jameson, 1986: 303) and somehow resist identification as belonging to any one genre, national cinema, auteur, or avant-garde movement. Nevertheless, while his application of the term "magic realism" seems sometimes quite arbitrary, he does break down the composite elements of the mode into its essential commonalities. Firstly, selecting films from Latin America and the former Soviet Union as examples, he argues that each film marks a geopolitical response to capitalist commodity culture. The collective histories of oppressed peoples are focalized through individuals, or small groups of characters. These overlapping historical pasts, both ancient and recent, reveal the cultural hybridity of areas that have been subjected to colonial and totalitarian rule. As a point of contrast, Jameson argues that one tends to see a "waning of *affect*" (Jameson, 1984: 61, emphasis in original) in the postmodern film, in which glossy, nostalgic images of the past signal the weakening of sociohistorical meaning (Jameson, 1986). Conversely, cinematic magic realism is the visual deconcealment of the political unconscious in which violent images explode into a "documentary-style realism" that is synthesized with oneiric and extraordinary worlds. For Jameson the magic affect seems to be tied to the Freudian uncanny, the return of the repressed, which has sociopolitical as well as personal implications. There is no assigned hierarchy and no resolution between the "real" and the imagined, and in Jameson's historical materialist reading this presents the possibility for a radical imagining of difference that is resistant to commodification.

Such hybridity of both form and content is exemplified in Jameson's remarks about Luis Buñuel's filmmaking. He describes how Buñuel's surrealist camera records sinister documentary footage in *Las Hurdes*, aka *Tierra sin pan* (Land Without Bread, 1933) (Jameson, 1992: 96); and compares this to the magically real Turkmen landscape, desaturated of color in the Russian filmmaker Alexander Sokurov's *Dni zatmeniya* (Days of Eclipse, 1988). Furthermore, he considers Buñuel's later work (citing *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* (The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie, 1972)) and *Cet obscur objet du désir* (That Obscure Object of Desire, 1977) to be closer to the mode of magic realism than to the Surrealism of *L'Âge d'or* (The Golden Age, 1930), because they document the inherent strangeness of a contemporary reality that had no need of surrealizing to emphasize the unreal and irrational. In fact Jameson seems often to misunderstand, or ignore, the facets

of surrealist practice as they were originally conceived in the 1920s, and how they were incorporated into Buñuel's aesthetic. However, Buñuel's conviction that film should be representative of the "anguish of society as a whole" (Bunuel, 1995: 138) certainly accords with Jameson's view of cinematic magic realism as the mode of the collective. Moreover, Buñuel's account of filming *Las Hurdes*, in which "a primitive civilization corresponds with a contemporary culture" (Buñuel, 1995: 220), documents the strange convergence of temporal and social realms that he experienced, thus exemplifying Jameson's anthropological magic realism.

It is the aim of this chapter to redefine Buñuel's cinematic aesthetic as a combination of these two modes, a "magic Surrealism." Cinematic magic Surrealism shall be defined as a transnational mode in which contingency, fantasy, irrationality, social instability, and supernatural or superstitious events overlap without hierarchy. It will also illustrate how Buñuel's magic surrealist legacy in *Los olvidados* can be traced in Hiroshi Teshigahara's visually striking *Otoshiana*, a film in which documentary, surrealist, and magical elements converge. Teshigahara was linked to the international surrealist movement in Japan, and admired Buñuel's work greatly, particularly *Los olvidados* which, as he recalls in interview with Dore Ashton, despite the horrors of its subject matter never descended into melodrama (Ashton, 1997: 64). These films both depict a social underclass struggling to survive by whatever means necessary. Buñuel and Teshigahara set their marginalized and impoverished characters against inhuman landscapes, trapped between the reality of the social conditions and the liminal imaginary of repressed memories and daydreams.

Buñuel's contribution to Surrealism as the movement's foremost filmmaker has been well documented (Kyrou, 1963; Williams, 1981; Buñuel, 1982; Richardson, 2006; Short, 2008). Buñuel recalls Surrealism as a "cry" that united artists who were already predisposed toward practicing "instinctive forms of irrational expression" (Buñuel, 1982: 105). His own surrealist awakening occurred when he saw a photograph in *La Révolution Surréaliste* of "Benjamin Péret Insulting a Priest," which he admired for its frankness (Buñuel, 2003). From the first showing of his debut film *Un chien andalou* (An Andalusian Dog) in 1929 to his death in 1983, Buñuel presented new and unconventional ways of seeing the everyday world that fitted with many of the ideas practiced by André Breton and his circle in 1920s Paris. He hoped that *Los olvidados* would be "realistic, but with a subtle current of fierce and sometimes erotic poetry" (cited in Polizzotti, 2006: 34). Always careful to distinguish his work from that of pure escapism or oneiric symbolism, his films remind us of André Breton's words – "The fantastic doesn't exist, everything is real" (cited in Hammond, 2000: 115) –underlining the surrealist belief that dreams, *amour fou*, or sudden juxtapositions are not separate from the ordinary. For Buñuel, cinema had to provide a "whole" view of reality that was both socially critical *and* marvelous and irrational. However, Buñuel's irrationality and his dedication to uncovering the strange and latent mysteries of everyday reality also fit the "manifesto" of magic realism: a contemporaneous art-historical mode that shares many sociocultural and aesthetic concerns with Surrealism. Both modes emerged out of

dissatisfaction with the artistic movements of the time and both Surrealists and exponents of *magischer realismus* alike were similarly inspired by metaphysical painter Georgio de Chirico (1888–1978), the magical images of Henri Rousseau (1844–1910), and the tales of Edgar Allan Poe (1809–1849). Due to the sheer number of artists in exile, each movement spread throughout Europe to later reach Latin America, where, by the late 1940s, magic realism came to be identified primarily with the Latin American colonial experience. In *Los olvidados* Buñuel straddles the anthropological context of Latin American reality in 1950s Mexico and a European avant-garde legacy that bloomed in the 1920s.

Art-historical and Literary Roots of Magic Realism: An International Mode

The term *magischer realismus* (magic realism) was coined by German art historian Franz Roh (1890–1965) in his 1925 preface to *Nach-Expressionismus, Magischer Realismus: Probleme der neuesten Europaischen Malerei* (Post-Expressionism, Magic Realism: Problems of the New European Painting) to define a new kind of painting devoted to the sober, marvelous, uncanny, and hyperbolically detailed portrayal of the modern object world. Unusual perspective and unnatural brightness ensure that familiarity is stripped away, revealing sometimes strange and mysterious depths that due to their "realism" are nevertheless a far cry from the abstracted "utopian counterworld" of the Expressionists (Elger, 2002: 7–8). The paintings of artists such as Franz Radziwill (1895–1983) and Georg Schrimpf (1889–1938), or the fantastic photomontages of Max Ernst (1891–1976), for example, revealed worlds that hinted at the hidden "interior figure, of the exterior world" (Roh, 1995: 25). This new form of "realism" contained some of the oneiric elements of Surrealism, without reducing objects to what Roh saw as odd, emptied symbols. Meanwhile, Breton and fellow Surrealist Pierre Mabille had been using the term *merveilleux*, or marvelous, to refer to the ongoing eruption of unconscious thought, or uncanny coincidence into everyday reality. Every attempt, whether surrealist or magic realist, was made to reimagine the everyday through the extraordinary layers of the mundane. However, each mode was to vary slightly on how this metamorphosis in perception was to be achieved.

Several figures straddle both Surrealism and *magischer realismus*, but none so markedly as Buñuel, and Max Ernst, whose disruption of conventional pictorial space in his photomontages offers the possibility for seeing the world anew. Breton, in the preface to the catalogue for Ernst's solo exhibition in 1921, remarked on his "marvellous faculty of attaining two widely separate realities without departing from the realm of our experience, … and drawing a spark from their contact" (cited in Richardson, 1996: 115). Ernst's work was often extolled by Roh, who included him in his list of magic realist painters in 1925. For Roh, himself a keen

dabbler in photomontage, Ernst's work had a fantastic quality and spontaneity that he does not seem to associate with other surrealist-"manufactured" art works, and which can be likened to Buñuel's films. Ernst was also marked by Buñuel as one of the "real surrealist painters from the Parisian years" (2003: 121) and it is of note that he later acted in *L'Âge d'or*. What Buñuel saw in Surrealism's psychologically invested worlds of "heightened senses" (Mabille, 1998: 2) corresponds to Roh's discovery that *magischer realismus* paintings revealed something in the exterior world that reverberated with palpable tension.

Roh's essay was translated into Spanish and published in José Ortega y Gasset's magazine *Revista de Occidente* in 1927, but this did not spark a major revival of the mode until 1949, when Cuban novelist Alejo Carpentier (1904–1980) penned his *Lo real maravilloso americano* (The Marvelous Real in America). Carpentier, having fled to Paris in 1928, was introduced to the surrealist group through his friend, poet Robert Desnos, and often wrote of his 11 years in Paris, and the influence of Surrealism on his writing. However, his connection to Breton, like Buñuel's, is mostly remembered for having ended in disillusionment: "If Surrealism pursued the marvelous, one would have to say that it very rarely looked for it in reality. It is true that for the first time the Surrealists knew how to see the poetic force of a window display or a market, but more often their fabrication of the marvelous was premeditated" (cited in Zamora and Faris, 1995: 103). This Parisian Surrealism struck him as "manufactured," an aesthetic practice in which the marvelous is willed into being. A Latin American marvelous, by contrast, had no need to manipulate the object world in order to conjure the extraordinary. Prompted by close friends Desnos and Georges Bataille (both of whom had also parted way with Breton's circle), Carpentier realized that he needed to return to Cuba in search of an authentic marvelous.

It was in the preface to his novel *El Reino de este mundo* (The Kingdom of this World), dedicated to the portrayal of Haitian violence, and its syncretic blend of indigenous, African, European, and mestizo cultures, that Carpentier set out his own version of the surrealist *merveilleux*. He named it *lo real maravilloso*, taking the surrealist moniker rather than Roh's "magical" realism. Carpentier explains that throughout Latin America, "as far as the marvelous real is concerned, we have only to reach out our hands to grasp it. Our contemporary history presents us with strange occurrences every day … We have forged a language appropriate to the expression of our *realities*" (cited in Zamora and Faris, 1995: 107, emphasis in original). These geographical, political, and historical layers presented to him an ontological reality that was immediately marvelous regardless of its beauty or ugliness: "Everything strange, everything amazing, everything that eludes established norms is marvelous" (cited in Zamora and Faris, 1995: 101), and it should be noted that these words carry similar sentiments to Breton's words in "Surrealism and Painting" (1928): "The marvelous is always beautiful, anything that is marvelous is beautiful; indeed, nothing but the marvelous is beautiful" (Breton, 1968: 414). Carpentier's emphasis on an ontological marvelous reality is in fact tied to an

internationally felt loss of identity at this time, both in Europe and outside. In the search for "authenticity" artists sought to "exoticize" their stagnant or jaded cultural experience by looking for something new. Just as Carpentier gained insight into ethnographic surrealist practice in Paris (see Clifford, 1988; Ubilluz, 2006), Mabille, Breton, Bataille, and others traveled to Latin America where they were inspired by the local customs, art, and culture.

For Surrealists and magic realists alike, the marvelous represents a point of convergence, at which contradiction disappears. In his *Second Manifesto of Surrealism* (1930), Breton famously discussed how the principal goal of surrealist practice was the dissolution of rigid boundaries between the real and the imagined, or the communicable and incommunicable (Breton, 2010: 123). Similarly for magic realism, Amaryll Chanady defines an "unresolved antinomy" that results from the constant tension between the real and the unreal: "Magical realism belongs neither entirely to the domain of fantasy, by which we mean the creation of a world totally different from ours, nor to that of reality, which is our conventional everyday world" (Chanady, 1985: 27). Significantly, both magic realism and Surrealism arrive at definitions of their own artistic practices via a delimitation that involves the fantastic. Tzvetan Todorov describes the fantastic as the duration of uncertainty that accompanies an event that cannot be explained by the laws of our world; it is a hesitation (see Todorov, 1975). The literary genre of the fantastic, for example, maintains this uncertainty throughout, resulting in a split between what is real and believable and what is not. In contrast, neither magic realism nor Surrealism questions the believability of marvelous events, they are part of the reality. Thus the superstitious shocks that punctuate the narrative of *Nadja* (1928) or the "miraculous" swarms of butterflies in Carpentier's novel *Los pasos perdidos* (The Lost Steps, 1956; the title is taken from Breton's text of the same name) function as formerly hidden or unconscious parts of reality that have been brought to the surface.

Los olvidados: Buñuel's Latin American Marvelous

In his essay "On Magic Realism in Film," although he sticks to the "magic" of Roh's definition, Jameson follows Carpentier's *lo real maravilloso* because it belies a commitment to social transformation through art: "a metamorphosis in perception and in things perceived" (1986: 301). This strain of the mode is rooted in the colonial experience and the geopolitical transformation that ensued at the expense of human life. Buñuel was passionate about the surrealist call to revolution, and in his autobiography *My Last Sigh* he peppers his narrative with numerous recollections of having created scandal by going against the grain of social etiquette or government rule. But he was equally passionate about *real* revolution, and his own personal experience of the Spanish Civil War and of neocolonial Mexico bled into his films, with his attention to the irrationality of human suffering in later

films seeming increasingly magically real. Whilst criticism has often focused on Buñuel's position within the wider surrealist *oeuvre* (Richardson, 2006; Harper and Stone, 2007; Short, 2008; Adamowicz, 2010), his films are also geopolitically hybrid: the products of a nomadic and migratory life and of experiences garnered in the Mexican and Hollywood film industries. For Víctor Fuentes, it is Buñuel's Mexican films in particular that share a magic realist aesthetic with Latin American "boom" novelists, from Carpentier onward. He argues, in direct contrast to Jameson, that "there is little room for doubt that, as they erased the border between the real and the fantastic, the surrealists opened the way for magical realism" (Fuentes, 2004: 91). Fuentes establishes Buñuel's particular cinematic magic realism as an ethnographic strain of Surrealism: "Surrealism with a profound vision of Mexican reality that finds its roots in its pre-Hispanic myths" (Fuentes, 2004: 91). This was the reality that many Surrealists sought out in their trips to Latin America and the Caribbean when they felt that they had exhausted their own quotidian reality and needed to reinvest it with something from beyond the limits of first world capitalism. "The Creole Dialogue between André Breton and André Masson," for example, belies the European artist's fascination with Latin America: "One wonders to what extent the poverty of European vegetation is responsible for the mind's flight toward an imaginary flora. What are we trying to escape from … when we go back to less civilized places?" (Breton, 2008: 44). For Buñuel the outsider, who made Mexico his home for 36 years, the Mexican capacity for violence, the propensity toward superstition, set together with the extreme poverty and political oppression, proved fertile material for *Los olvidados*.

Los olvidados has been studied from various approaches, which include uncovering the Surrealism of the dream sequence (Evans, 1995), and its particularity as a document of crisis and change in Mexican culture (Acevedo-Muñoz, 2003). Ado Kyrou thought it to be the first of Buñuel's films in which it could be said that the setting matched the "unusual elements" (Kyrou, 1963: 49). But the real magic of this film lies in the sum of all its parts. Jameson has argued that magic realist films address a collective political unconscious by unearthing and exposing the historical past through a "perpetual present" of violence and suffering. He states that "the possibility of magic realism as a formal mode is constitutively dependent on a type of historical raw material in which disjunction is structurally present; or … depends on a content which betrays the overlap or the coexistence of precapitalist with nascent capitalist or technological features" (Jameson, 1986: 311). In *Los olvidados* the skeletal structures of buildings abandoned mid-construction – of thwarted progress – rise out of slums populated by the unemployed, the rural farmer, and the physically sick. On the outskirts a progressive school attempts to educate the miscreants and the rural poor, but such measures seem completely futile for a group of people whose lives are still dictated by hunger and a fear of supernatural retribution.

The band of mostly homeless delinquents that brawl, scrabble, and trick their way through the dusty, claustrophobic, detritus-filled streets and plots of half-developed land in *Los olvidados* form a multi-bodied underclass. The story is

focalized through these abandoned children, who, like the diseased inhabitants of *Las Hurdes*, are in a state of perpetual hunger. As the opening credits roll, a series of mid-range shots reveal a rubble-filled slum, which, the narrator tells us, has been left to the "progressive forces" of social modernization. This, the narrator explains, is the poverty behind each magnificent building in Mexico City, worlds away from the elegant montage of world-famous cities that Buñuel then presents for us to contemplate the dizzying juxtaposition. The characters, a mix of skilled and non-actors, represent microcosmic forms of human detritus, prepared to do anything to survive. They live among the animals, and if they are lucky sometimes find themselves crushed into the dark labyrinthine passages of shanty houses already overflowing with children. Here Buñuel employs the dissolve to alienating effect, creating paradoxical spaces that are limited (narrow and cramped) yet infinite (we have no idea where the town ends). In addition, transitions between day and night, or shifts from the present back to a memory sequence or daydream, are seamlessly joined by this same technique. Furthermore, adding to this infinite claustrophobia are scenes composed to emphasize the children's proximity to the dusty earth. They sleep in the dirt, fight among the rubbish, crouch close to the ground, and eventually they too become dirt – their corpses dumped unceremoniously with the animal carcasses and waste.

Similar scenes had made a distinct impression on Buñuel when filming *Las Hurdes* in Spain's Extremadura, perhaps magnified in light of the fact that as a privileged child in his hometown in Calanda the images of "abject poverty made no impression on us whatsoever" (Buñuel, 2003: 17). They constitute what Buñuel saw as the "documentary" elements of the film, which, as always, were infused with the bizarre: "For me *Los olvidados* is a film about social struggle … I observed things that moved me, and I wanted to transpose those things onto the screen – but to do so with the love I have for the instinctive and the irrational that can reveal itself in anything and everything" (cited in Kyrou, 1963: 113). As a result, the collective unconscious of human struggle in the film is revealed not though individual characters, but through the relentless poverty and absurd cruelty of the slum environment itself. When extraordinary elements are added to this already irrational situation, they are not separated from the reality. For example, in the much-discussed dream sequence, Pedro's dream, rich with Oedipal suggestion, becomes universal because Buñuel represents the boy's fears through the common visual language of nightmares: images sped up and slowed down, flashes of light and opaque shadows, or the repetition of motifs that frighten us in real life. "Quite simply, Buñuel refuses to prune reality of all its hidden aspects. Similar images live within us, even when we are not asleep" (Bazin, 1997: 13).

In comparison, in magic realism, ghosts or spirits are often employed to communicate between the living and the dead, and as a narrative device that brings together disparate time periods with no jarring sense of unreality. Death in *Los olvidados* comes in many forms: the death of buildings succumbing to inevitable entropy, Pedro's necklace stolen from the tomb of a dead man to ward off evil, the



Figure 29.1 The indeterminacy between life and death in *Los olvidados*. Ultramar Films.

death of animals slaughtered by bare hands, and the death of humans are all commonplace and often unnoticed. However, the most magically real of all is the ghostly scene in which Jaibo is dying. The leader of the gang, stripped of any former bravado, lies dying in the street, terrified of the afterlife: "I'm falling into a black hole. I'm alone, I'm alone," he cries. As he slips into death, he hears his mother's voice, while simultaneously an image of a stray dog is superimposed over his body. Thus his worst fear manifests itself, his metamorphosis into animal form almost complete. Palimpsestic memory traces flit over his body clothed in a dreamy haziness as the transition from real to inanimate begins. But for several tense moments we stay with Jaibo, hovering between the real and the inanimate in the borderless state of indeterminacy between life and death (Figure 29.1).

Indigenous Japanese Modernism: *Otoshiana* and the Struggle for Survival

Buñuel's unforgiving depiction of Mexico City and his visualization of lives trapped in indeterminacy and left to chance are taken up by Teshigahara more than a decade later in his documentary-fantasy *Otoshiana*, made under the creative auspices of the Art Theatre Guild, Japan. The son of Sofu Teshigahara, whose innovative art had radicalized the traditional world of *ikebana* (Japanese flower arrangement), Teshigahara graduated in painting from the Tokyo Art Institute where, according to Joan Mellen, "his primary interest was Surrealism" (cited in

Ashton, 1997: 63). From the outset, Teshigahara's view of art and of the world was influenced not only by his father's generation's traditionalism and his father's radical position within it, but by what lay outside Japan, overseas.

In this regard, the reception of early examples of avant-garde and surrealist film in Japan is based upon a small viewing population. Firstly, only a small number of films were available, and these were brought to Japan by cineastes, who had seen them whilst traveling abroad. Various individuals had attempted to establish cinemas for the exhibition of avant-garde films at a time when Hollywood cinema was, even before the American occupation, dominating the box office. Films such as Man Ray's *L'Étoile de mer* (The Starfish, 1928) and Germaine Dulac's *La Coquille et le clergyman* (The Seashell and the Clergyman, 1927) were brought back to Japan from France (see Nada, 1992). But often, however, critics introduced films in journalistic articles that were promptly banned before even reaching a public audience. As a result, the very idea of the foreign avant-garde film came to be dissected, misappropriated, and misunderstood by individuals who had perhaps never even seen the films themselves. Problems arose immediately, with the term "avant-garde" being associated with communism, for example. On the one hand, this alerted governmental forces to be suspicious of films that contained "subversive" content, and on the other, left-wing sympathizers were suspicious of films that they considered to be made by intellectuals who had no connection to the proletariat. In an article reviewing the situation, former Prokino leader Sasa Genju reflected on these judgments:

> So-called proletarian criticism was prevalent in those days. But it was not genuine Marxist criticism. Every critic depended on ideological values only, and films were judged as all or nothing. Once French avant-garde films were labeled "nothing" any positive criticism about them was rejected. I firmly accuse the lazy proletarian critics for their neglect of the devoted aestheticists and avant-garde films. (Cited in Nada, 1992: 69–70)

One tactic used by film journalists during this period was to stress the radical nature of surrealist films and their reception abroad in order to convince the left of their revolutionary potential. Citing the example of the infamous Paris showing of Buñuel's *L'Âge d'or*, one film journalist referenced French film critic Léon Moussinac's assertion that "*L'Âge d'or* is not film for the proletariat, but I think that it can be useful for a sketch of the proletarian revolution" (cited in Nada, 1992: 69). Similar issues, of course, were surfacing in European Surrealism, which, as Buñuel testifies in *My Last Sigh* was by the late 1920s starting to implode as a result of the tensions between various political factions. Breton states several times in the *Second Manifesto* that the link between communism and Surrealism was implicit; however, he was also cognizant of the distance between his own bourgeois position and the working classes, which meant that he was ultimately unable to fully embrace communism. Instead he reaffirms

surrealist practice as an ideological methodology with mutual political concerns: "In order to be viable, this work demands to be *situated* in relationship to certain other already existing works and must, in its turn, open up new paths" (Breton, 2010: 155, emphasis in original). Buñuel, less willing to justify an ideological position hemmed in either by communist doctrine or the regulatory guidelines set in place by Breton, finally decided to part ways with Surrealism and communism, for in different ways they had both tried to restrict the creation of his art. He was, however, always to hold on to the surrealist axiom that scandal was capable of revolution and social exposé, and that this in turn could transform life itself. This facet of his work was inspirational to Teshigahara and his friends novelist Kobo Abe (1924–1983) and musician Toru Takemitsu (1930–1996), with whom he collaborated on his most famous films. Although few of Buñuel's films were available in Japan until after World War II, they helped to fan the flames of a desire "to build a *radically different view of the world*" (Ashton, 1997: 33, emphasis added). Teshigahara's first four feature films were all collaborations with Abe: *Otoshiana* (1962), *Suna no onna* (Woman in the Dunes, 1964), *Tanin no kao* (The Face of Another, 1966), and *Moetsukita chizu* (The Ruined Map, aka The Man without a Map, 1968). *Otoshiana* was an adaptation of Abe's television screenplay, *Purgatory*. Along with Toru Takemitsu, who composed the hauntingly jarring avant-garde scores for each of the films, Abe and Teshigahara were members of the Yoru no kai (Night Association) group founded by newspaper editor Kiyoteru Hanada in 1948, which also counted surrealist artist Taro Okamoto among its members (see Motoyama, 1995). Yoru no kai advocated a "materialism in which equality is extended to all things, not only to humans and animals but also to the inanimate" and believed that "Surrealism was the only approach that could create this vision of a world of total equality" (Motoyama, 1995: 306). Both Abe and Teshigahara's work exhibits strong Marxist and surrealist tendencies, and in *Otoshiana* these are artfully combined to produce a magic-surreality that also fits Jameson's cinematic definition of magic realism. Teshigahara, like Buñuel in his comment above on *Las Hurdes*, tends not to distinguish between the dichotomized and pejorative terms "primitive" and "civilized" in his films, in which human behavior is cruel and absurd regardless of class or location (Mellen, 1975: 176–177). Thus similarities may be traced between the dusty, claustrophobic shantytowns in Buñuel's Mexico City and the rocky expanses of southernmost Spain in *Las Hurdes*, and the life-sucking slag heaps of rural Japan in *Otoshiana*. Each of these films is filmed in black and white, shot on location, and each exerts a materialist view of social marginalization in which human bodies and landscapes alike are objectified but never dehumanized. Through the magic-surrealist lens, modern Japan, Mexico City, and rural Spain are broken down into the cultural montage of that which Lois Parkinson Zamora terms "usable past," which refers to the "buried" histories that are unearthed in postcolonial and magic realist literature (Zamora, 1997: 11), in order to realize the strange visual manifestations of Jameson's political unconscious.

Teshigahara follows Buñuel in his uncompromising quest to fuse the absurd, cruel, and irrational with a "thorough realism" (cited in Matson, 2002: 64). He was adamant that his films would not be limited by established boundaries of genre or historical lineage: "In art there must never be any borderlines" (cited in Ashton, 1997: 9) and this seems to apply to every aspect of his films, in which temporality, spatiality, human existence, nature, animalism, and spiritualism cannot be neatly categorized or assimilated into linear narrative. *Otoshiana* manages to juxtapose the Buñuelian-surrealist influence, the ancient Japanese literary tradition of the ghost story, and the historical marginalization of the *burakumin*, a discriminatory term used to refer to a low social caste associated with poor, rural families whose fathers worked for tanneries, abattoirs, and industries that were generally considered unclean, with footage of labor union demonstrations in the 1960s and ironic references to media and communication technology.

The film tells the story of a young miner and his son, who on their way to find work, happen upon a deserted village. They become trapped in a horrific *mise en abyme* of mistaken identity, as the father is killed suddenly by a stranger in a white suit and gloves. Meanwhile, tensions are brewing in a nearby mining community as two opposed labor unions head for an irreconcilable clash of ideologies. Teshigahara never explains the identity of the killer dressed in white, or his motive for murder which resonates with a variety of scenes from Breton's *Nadja* (1928), in which contingency plays the biggest role. He remains ambiguous, a surreal pantomime figure that could represent any number of the irrational faces of contemporary (1960s) culture. Nevertheless, Inuhiko Yomota offers some compelling readings of his identity: "an incarnation of capitalism? … the henchman of the avant-garde which ridicules and despises the working class, or simply a monomaniacal murderer? … *Otoshiana* is a grotesque portrayal of the absurdity and inconsistency of modern society" (Yomota, 2009: s.n.). Ultimately he is the irrational personified. Each victim that falls to him is transformed into a ghost, trapped in limbo between their previous life and the afterlife, although absurdly, even in ghost form they each retain the human suffering – hunger, back pain – that blighted them when they were alive.

Teshigahara often referred to his film as a "documentary-fantasy," an ambiguous term that when mediated through Buñuel's words begins to make more sense. Teshigahara explains how he was striving toward a particular "vivid style of filmmaking" that could render both the everydayness of human beings and landscape *and* the fantastic story conceived by Abe through a detailed "documentary-like technique" (Matson, 2008: 74). Teshigahara was particularly impressed by *Los olvidados*, which he praised for its characters positioned "so that the depths of their minds were hinted at" (cited in Ashton, 1997: 64). Abe was also struck by "the mutual transition" between Surrealism and a "documentary-like method" in Buñuel's film, of which he argued that "for the first time … both [Surrealism and documentary] have been supported by an avant-garde consciousness" (cited in Matson, 2008: 36–37). Teshigahara had also had plenty of firsthand experience working in documentary filmmaking during the 1950s as an assistant to Fumio

Kamei (1908–1987). However, Kamei's work became a source of consternation to him, because he felt that truths and contradictions were ignored in order to prioritize the director's sentiments. Teshigahara felt Kamei's work "was too shallow, too ideological" (cited in Ashton, 1997: 62), and he became suspicious of any film that deliberately manipulated the image for political consciousness-raising. After having seen *Los olvidados*, Teshigahara's aim became to make a film that fused fictional (dramatic), fantastic (imaginary and supernatural), and realistic (political, factual) elements. With *Otoshiana* he certainly produced a film that seamlessly blends between the surreal and magical existence of ghosts, and an avant-garde approach to documentary that underlines the absurdity of real events such as the mining dispute. Donald Richie criticized Abe's script for not being sufficiently political and for leaving him "with not one but a dozen different impressions" (cited in Mellen, 1975: 164), and described Teshigahara's cinematic interpretation as a "metaphysical adventure story" (cited in Mellen, 1975: 163). However, it was precisely Teshigahara's aim to present a cinematic world that, whilst referring to actual historical events, imagined them in multivariate ways and thus in turn allowed for political specificity to have a wider social relevance.

Jean-Louis Comolli's erudite discussion of *direct* cinema makes an important assertion that seems applicable to Buñuel and Teshigahara's filmmaking: "The 'fictional' and the 'documentary' are not always either autonous [*sic*] or impermeable to each other" (Comolli, 1980: 235). He maintains that the camera, the process of making film, necessarily blurs the boundaries between what can seem and what is real: "all film-documents and every recording of a raw event take on a filmic reality which either adds to or subtracts from their particular initial reality … un-realising or sur-realising it, but in both cases slightly falsifying and drawing it to the side of fiction" (Comolli, 1980: 226–227). Thus, film as a medium perfectly serves the surreal and magic realist imperative for transformation of perception. The landscape seems artificial, but we know that *Otoshiana* was filmed on location in Oita and Kyushu; the miner has become a ghost but still experiences the hunger pangs that were with him when he was alive; the intercut footage of demonstrating miners is made to seem anachronistically ancient against the immediacy of the fantastic and the supernatural. Each aspect of the film has a double aspect: a liminality hovering between the concrete and the ephemeral – the just-here and the ancient past. Moreover, Teshigahara's unsentimental depiction of a community of miners follows Buñuel's dictate that the "secret and odious underpinnings" (Buñuel, 2003: 107) of the system have to be exposed, and their absurd reality uncovered in order to evoke change. Indeed, the story owes much to real events that changed the direction of postwar industrial reform. Disputes between management-controlled unions and workers over safety measures at the Mitsui-Miike coalmine in Kyushu during 1959 and 1960 resulted in demonstrations, strikes,and murder (see Martin, 1961; Price, 1991), and Teshigahara's translation of Abe's original screenplay foregrounds the historical impact of these events by intercutting real documentary footage of labor union protests into the film. In addition, a stylized social realism

is achieved through the foregrounding of corporeality and labor, and the hunger and suffering attributed to poverty and an unfixed lifestyle. At no point is the connection between labor and commodity lost: the gigantic slagheaps have been molded by human effort. Yet they also take on a surreal patina as the play of shadows and light reveal mottled and shifting surfaces, recalling Max Ernst's tactile *grattages and frottages* – paintings that express the materiality of the exterior world through texture. Human beings are dwarfed by surreal peaks and blend into the grainy bas-relief of these earth pictures.

Fredric Jameson argues that part of the affect of cinematic magic realism is due to an over-investment of libidinal intensity in particular images (the manifestation of hidden desires, taboos, or repressed ideals that burst forth into the film narrative). Naturally similar affect can be generated in other genres such as the thriller, the horror, or the surrealist dream sequence, for example, in which events are manipulated to provoke a heightened response in the spectator. However, if the criterion that he uses to separate cinematic magic realism from other genres is isolated, what appears is a combination of both visual and contextual (historical and political) factors that are set in motion by the libidinal drives (of communities, of individuals) and the resulting fulfillment, or frustrated eruption, of these desires within the narrative. Indeed, Jameson often applies the term "libidinal" to describe the relationship between the immiserated peoples in the films that he discusses and the strange and violent narrative eruptions that result from their suffering and dissatisfaction (see Jameson, 1986: 301–325). According to Jameson, this is achieved through a number of processes: the application of vivid color (with a monochromatic tonal palette this is achieved through the application of brightness, as in the effect of the burning sun or falling shadows and the white-suited man in *Otoshiana*); the condensation of several ideas or several layers of history into one image; and the "vertical" interruption of the narrative in which an object causes the action to be paused or diverted momentarily.

This analysis is rooted, in part, in Deleuze and Guattari's two-volume work on capitalism and schizophrenia (which is acknowledged on many occasions by Jameson); in the second volume, *Mille Plateaux* (A Thousand Plateaus), they explain how "a microscopic event upsets the local balance of power" (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004: 16). They contend that an event can be a "perverse mutation" of the hegemonic order, a hallucination, an imagined scene, a poignant memory (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004: 16). These sensations are emotional and unpredictable, and when transformed into a film image have the ability to dislodge expectation by going against the grain of the narrative. Such images do not correspond to any one history or generation – but in their resistance to assimilation or categorization they are inherently, although not always overtly, political. In the film image such "magical" and "perverse" images retain elements of multifarious pasts but reconsider them in radical ways.

For example, in *Otoshiana*, one of the most arresting images is when the little boy watches as his dead father's body rises from the muddy lakeside (a scene that has many obvious similarities to Jaibo's death scene) (Figure 29.2). The slow-motion



Figure 29.2 Visualising the unrepresentable, in *Otoshiana*. Teshigahara Productions and Toho Company.

reanimation is mesmerizing. As the thin body starts to levitate, the image reverberates with the injustice of murder, the strange marginality that characterizes the village, the cold gaze of the child, and with questions as to why any of this is happening. His body thus becomes the site upon which layers of meaning are condensed: "Seeing the reality of the body in all its good and bad qualities, in its beauty and its filth, enlarges perspective" (Tessier, 2007: s.n.). The voices and images are not always synched and in a humorous simulation of the disjuncture between body and soul the ghosts speak from a disembodied space, whilst images of the police removing the corpse for autopsy remain on the screen. Later, a freeze frame draws the spectator in to a close-up of the ghost's face as he realizes the mistaken identity, signaled by the immediate cut to the face of the union secretary, undoubtedly his spitting image, juxtaposed with the words, "Can it be just a coincidence then?" The murder, the mistaken identity, and the reanimation, though bizarre and overly coincidental, are always based within the pathos of the film and thus serve to critique the narrative.

Marvelous Hybridity: A Composite Avant-Garde Response to Late Capitalism

Jameson never includes Breton directly in his analysis, but the composite yet antithetical elements of the surrealist marvelous – the romantic ruin (an interweaving of history and nature), the commodified (automated) human form, the *fixed-explosive* (a static image suggestive of intense movement), contingency, and

the uncanny – actually works very well with his conception of magical real intensity. Both Buñuel and Teshigahara investigate the human condition, the degradation of the quality of life through the uncertain bodies and locations in their films. A combination of the magical real (folklore, superstition, buried histories) and the surreal (dreams, repressed fantasies, spontaneous juxtaposition) culminates in an avant-garde style (self-reflexivity, camera trickery, disrupted sound-to-image matches) that allows for the unrepresentable to be conceived realistically. Although the measurements of each composite part vary between the films (with *Las Hurdes* the closest to Comolli's *direct* cinema, and *Otoshiana* containing the largest percentage of surreal events), each manages to sustain a balance between the believable and the unexplained without forcing the spectator to choose. Thus even the surrealist mime-performance (reminiscent of the tennis game at the end of Antonioni's *Blow Up* [1966]), in which the former inhabitants of the deserted town are silently re-enacting the movements of their daily routines, is made to seem real because the sense of financial ruin runs through the "performance." Stylistically, technical effects such as slow motion, superimposition, and reversed images, or the avant-gardist staple of drawing attention to the artifice of filmmaking, are used throughout each film and to highlight the socio-corporeal ghostliness.

The cruelty depicted in *Otoshiana* mirrors that of *Los olvidados*. Jaibo's gang of miscreants and the perverse Caremelo are matched here with police who are rapists, journalists who act like vultures, a sadistic child happy to mutilate a frog, and thuggish miners exploited by the government to fight against rather than with each other. The "progressive forces" spelled out at the beginning of Buñuel's film become dual forces of life and death in *Otoshiana*, where the plight of the labor movement can only result in eternal disappointment, suffering, and hunger. Both Buñuel and Teshigahara highlight how a lack of food triggers hallucinations and desires that drive their characters to commit crime. Progress or modernization is a trap (a pitfall, to give the film's punning English title), in which you are destined to be forever encased in your own lack, your own inability to free yourself from the absurd march of fate and cruel coincidence.

Even now, the cinematic modes of Surrealism and magic realism remain at times confusingly interchangeable terms in both critical and mainstream discourse, which often fails to fully define either mode. Often the terminology is left hanging, with insufficient detail to understand what constitutes a film as specifically surrealist or magic realist. However, in looking at Buñuel's magic Surreality from its inception in the modernist avant-garde, it becomes apparent that there are, as Jameson's analysis partially explores, answers to be found for the overlaps of these two modes. Certainly Buñuel's art visualizes both the Freudian and sociopolitical represseds that Jameson argues can be located in cinematic magic realism, straddled somewhere between the radical impulse of high modernism and the cultural fragmentation characteristic of late capitalism. Thus, rather than delimiting the one through the other, more can be understood through the twofold legacy that Surrealism and magic realism have left for those films that remain marvelously hybrid.

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30

Luis Buñuel's *Angel* and Maya Deren's *Meshes*

Trance and the Cultural Imaginary

Susan McCabe

Who has not felt the discomfort of not knowing when dinner guests will leave? Who decides the appropriate time for departure? It is the most common of situations. What if, as in Luis Buñuel's *El ángel exterminador* (The Exterminating Angel, 1962), the guests *can't leave* – some inscrutable barrier prevents their movement? They are "castaways," as Buñuel's screenplay refers to them. When asked about such a plot in Woody Allen's *Midnight in Paris* (2011), the fictional 1920s Buñuel replies, dumbstruck: "Why don't they leave? They should just leave." The notion of leaving was not unfamiliar to Buñuel, an exile from his native Spain – in Paris, in New York, in Mexico, and then again in Paris, the latter two locations his most productive. For Robert J. Miles, *El ángel exterminador* is Buñuel's "first truly postmodern film." With its "perpetual exilic indeterminacy" and tension between home and "non-belonging" (2005: 86), *El ángel exterminador* also points backwards to an earlier, postmodern, second wave of surrealist filmmakers, of the period during and just after World War II.

In between *Un chien andalou* (An Andalusian Dog, 1929) and *El ángel exterminador*, film experiment did not sleep: the American avant-garde film movement inevitably draws upon Buñuel's earlier surrealist tactics, but more immediately credits the pioneer Maya Deren. Here I will examine Deren's *Meshes of the Afternoon* (1943), though I briefly consider her other filmic and critical forays to develop her shared notion with Buñuel of hypnotic "possession" as a kind of radical loosening of a subject's psychic or physical boundaries. A more immediate example linking Buñuel's *El ángel exterminador* and Deren occurs in *At Land* (1944). A somnambulist-like Deren maneuvers along a shore, until she crawls across the table of an elaborate dinner party of respectable men and women (this table could be in *El ángel exterminador*), where she then continues to crawl away, after absconding with

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a chess figure from the table's end (an allusion to Marcel Duchamp, notable chess player, with whom Deren collaborated on the incomplete 1943 *Witch's Cradle*). *At Land* continues until, as P. Adam Sitney puts it, "in a series of dramatic temporal ellipses [Deren] disappears among sand dunes" (1979: 24). The banquet signals a set of social rules she has abandoned. Deren crystallizes an aesthetics of uncanny motility, an heightened "unbelonging" that Buñuel uncannily enacts. To insert her into his lineage, to see *Meshes of the Afternoon* as ghostly precursor to *El ángel exterminador* makes sense, and to complete a chiasmus, his 1933 documentary, *Las Hurdes*, aka *Tierra sin pan* (Land Without Bread), anticipates her self-consciously "objectivist" approach during the 1950s in her unfinished documentary on Haiti.

Two Exiles

Buñuel's cumulative experience as a surrealist filmmaker is inextricably joined with the touchstone surrealist film, *Un chien andalou*, a collaboration with Salvador Dalí. As Buñuel's work progresses, it becomes more politically satiric, while at the same time, seemingly more narrative, where social rituals shape diegetic space. In light of his later films, and here paradigmatically, *El ángel exterminador*, the surrealist party did not end with a dwindling of guests, such as Dalí himself. After Surrealism's heyday, Dalí's Hollywood career flourished while Buñuel's reputation underwent a smudging. In "Pessimism" Buñuel explains retrospectively: "Dalí published a book in which he denounced me as an atheist, insinuating that I was a Communist (I never have been, nor an anarchist) … I had to present my resignation. I fell out with Dalí and afterward went to live in Mexico" (1995: 259). Buñuel's first film in Mexico, *Gran Casino*, aka *En el Viejo Tampico* (Magnificent Casino, 1947), considered a "bad film," did allow him to expand his directorial role.

In Mexico, Buñuel continued to draw upon slapstick and gags, as well as the dream hallucinations of his earlier work: the "believable" is tested in *El ángel exterminador*, but the characters still obey the visible laws of time and space – yet there are distinct ruptures. For instance, near the end of the film, he merges in a voice-over the eruptive dreams of multiple characters. The camera gives a moving pan across the sleepers, uniting a fragmented communal nightmare of dislocation (a sequence of visual and sonic interruptions I return to later). Further, "nationalism" intrudes as part of a densely fabricated mythos. During his period in Mexico, in the midst of making melodramatic films, he homes in on a more pointedly historical materialist perspective. The Spanish Civil War was lost by the Republicans, and World War II, still casting its shadow, was even more horrifying than World War I (during which Buñuel came of age); by 1962, his anti-clerical and anti-institutional stance reached a new peak that ushered in his final French films, those that brought him most recognition. But *El ángel exterminador* marks a return to and reinvention of surrealist tactics.

Like Buñuel, Deren had a history of exile. In 1922, Deren's parents had fled the Ukraine to the United States to escape anti-Semitic pogroms. Her father's work as a doctor at the Psychoneurological Institute of Moscow (where film theorist, perhaps the first, Hugo Münsterberg, was his colleague) became germane to her development. Deren also felt an affinity with the Russian Revolution and socialist ethics, which perhaps led to her "de-emphasis of individual psychology and stress on ritual" in her films (Nichols, 2001: 6). Like Buñuel, she experienced geographic exile as intensely psychological. Suggestive of her obsession with doubling and political unsettlement, before Deren met her husband, she worked on a mystery novel with her stepmother about "the infiltration of Nazi agents into Manhattan society," called *Double or Nothing*, which she wanted to send to Hitchcock (Clark, Hodson, and Neiman, 1984: 305).

Her career as a filmmaker began as a collaborator when she married Alexander Hammid in Los Angeles in 1942 (Clark, Hodson, and Neiman, 1984: xxiii); by 1943 they had made *Meshes of the Afternoon* in three weeks, set in the Hollywood Hills with its muted white light and stark shadows. She conceived the scenario, and he filmed it according to her template, while mentoring her emergent film aesthetics. She dedicated an essay, "Cinema as an Art Form," to her father, "who once spoke to me of life as an unsteady equilibrium" (Deren, 2005 [1946]: 19), which underscores her belief in the provisional and precarious stability of individuals and objects in any social setting, including the domestic sphere of *Meshes of the Afternoon*. In the film's opening, the bread and knife on the kitchen table resemble a painterly still, briefly, until the knife takes on its own uncanny life.

I question P. Adams Sitney's characterization of *Meshes of the Afternoon* as an "interior quest" (1979: 8). Such an assessment diminishes the film's exploration of the porous nature of interior and exterior, the self and the non-self, exemplified by multiple images of Deren watching herself in several externalized bodies, while *Meshes* goes beyond the singular body to a wider arena, a fact reinforced by the film's shadowy grainy texture along with the sense of the self as caught up in invisible, sometimes dizzying, force fields.

Sitney makes a connection between *Meshes of the Afternoon* and *Un chien andalou*, but as I will unfold, an alternative comparison with *El ángel exterminador* illuminates Deren's trance experiment, marking the boundaries with the external world as illusory; her tightly controlled 14-minute film ritually enacts the breakdown of the ego and the non-ego. Indeed, all Deren's work – her seven "complete" short films (about the length of a feature like the 93-minute *El ángel exterminador*) along with her Guggenheim application (hers was the first award for film art) to study voodoo ritual built upon a series of children's games – all call upon re-enactments, that resonate with *El ángel exterminador*. Both Buñuel and Deren strenuously rejected Surrealism and Freud; yet Deren continued to work in circles that owed a legacy to the first wave of surrealist practice, in the broadest sense, and was on the crest of a new wave of experimental film.

Had Buñuel been influenced by Deren's work? She died in 1961 before she could have seen *El ángel exterminador*. If somewhat whimsically, a posthumous influence might be fantasized. (We can invoke Michel Serres' notion of non-chronological influence or Susan Suleiman's focus on "staging intertextuality," as cited in this volume's introduction). Direct influence in either direction seems less important than the pair's abiding obsessions with time travel and haunted spaces. More concretely, given how schooled Deren was in historical Surrealism and experimental psychology, it is no wonder that her work continues in an active dialogue with Buñuel's.

El ángel exterminador operates in the trance mode that Deren had earlier cultivated. In doing so, I posit a kind of intertextual dance, where the earlier film mediates Bunuel's possibly direct influence upon Deren, and Deren's film highlights Buñuel's underscoring of the spectator's own hypnogogic position, pushing him or her outside a familiar psychic habitat. In fact, the audience for both vitally becomes a group in a constellation described by Freud in *Group Psychology* as a "fascination" or hypnosis – in which the self is mesmerized, paralyzed, given to "contagion" (1922: 3770). The main "figure" in *Meshes of the Afternoon* is not in a group in a conventional sense, or waylaid at a dinner party, but wanders, retraces her steps like a somnambulist, consorts with herself in triplicate, and confronts herself in strange binocular goggles wielding a knife, as well as with a "husband" (Hammid) who appears twice, the "last time" to discover the sleeper dead. There is a moment in the film when Deren stretches out of the bedroom window into a mesh-like curtain, so that we see her arching into a tracery of possible openings; the curtain's texture is paradigmatic for the way the film understands reality as an enmeshment, exploring the physical laws that keep it in "unstable equilibrium." In *El ángel exterminador*, the meshwork is more visible: dark comedy emerges from the discomfort created by the abandonment of individual will and a succumbing to an absurd belief permeating the group. They are overcome by the irrational, and their unconscious group instincts come to the fore; it is not accidental that Buñuel uses the blatant invocation of a "flock" of sheep to suggest both the "sacrificial" nature of community-building, and the captivation of individuals by political and religious ideologies.

Hypnosis and film are of course linked historically, but here both films make the theme a central meta-trope. Extensively relying upon Gustave Le Bon's 1895 *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind*, Freud furthers his agenda with his precursor's pertinent assertion: "He [i.e. the subject of hypnosis or group mentality] is no longer himself, but has become an automaton who has ceased to be guided by his will" (1922: 3771). Le Bon configures the group as inevitably degraded: "by the mere fact that [the individual] forms part of an organised group, a man descends several rungs in the ladder of civilization. Isolated, he may be a cultivated individual; in a crowd, he is a barbarian – that is, a creature acting by instinct. He possesses the spontaneity, the violence, the ferocity, and also the enthusiasm and heroism of primitive beings" (1922: 3772). Freud, for his part, confirms and then extends this assessment by interjecting familial libido energies as part and parcel of multiple charged spheres of enmeshment:

> Each individual is a component part of numerous groups, he is bound by ties of identification in many directions, and he has built up his ego ideal upon the most various models. Each individual therefore has a share in numerous group minds – those of his race, of his class, of his creed, of his nationality, etc. – and he can also raise himself above them to the extent of having a scrap of independence and originality. (1922: 3820)

Further, the impulse to bind the ego to an "ego ideal" or a "primal father," and in doing so, bind with a "group mind" to a charismatic leader, he observes, is a dangerous, tempting affair. In writing this study, Freud had not yet witnessed Hitler, Stalin, or Franco, but he had seen enough of the brutalization of the ego wrought by World War I, as well as anti-Semitic persecution, to understand this aspect of group psychology.

However, in both films under discussion, there is no visible hypnotist or group leader, no "ego ideal" qua "ego ideal" (the doctor in *El ángel exterminador* wants to be one, but is not). Instead, there is a pervasive sense, almost felt as tangible entity, of the inculcated class and historical consciousness of the group. Buñuel claimed in "Pessimism" that he was often called the super-ego in his earlier surrealist circle, believing as he did then in the ethics of solidarity (1995: 261). In other words, hypnosis is on such a macro scale, with the superhuman image-machines of the Catholic Church alongside the military apparatus, important figurations in the film's group hallucination or nightmare (addressed later). The two – church and state – converge at the end as armed military men descend upon the crowd: the screenplay reads obliquely: "From the plaza a loud rumbling, or clamor of a multitude, 'as from a mass uprising'," a cue followed by shot 197: "The quarantine flag. Vertical panning to the door of the church …" (220).

If film spectators identify with the "castaways" in *El ángel exterminador*, and laugh at them, the audience is both mesmerized and engaged in self-critique. Deren's *Meshes of the Afternoon* similarly reproduces our capacity to be possessed, forecasting her anthropological yet unfinished work in Haiti. The "trance film," as Sitney defines it, was "predicated upon the transparency of the somnambulistic protagonist within the dream landscape" (1979: 64) but, moreover, the camera mimics consciousness. In this sense, both Buñuel and Deren endow the camera with this prescient function. While I will not be able to forge fully all the connections possible between the films or filmmakers, I zoom in upon their enactment of the simultaneous malleability of time and space, with the subjection of the self to a shifting miasmic cultural imaginary.

Most critics of *Meshes of the Afternoon* follow Deren's and then Sitney's lead in viewing the film exclusively through an aesthetic lens. But I think it enriching to consider the backdrop of exile, her father's studies of hysteria and hypnosis, the threat of nuclear war and even of spies as fueling to some extent Deren's inventive, sometimes elusive, aims. *Meshes of the Afternoon*, created during World War II, was shown with *At Land* (1944) and *A Study for the Choreography of a Camera* (1945) at the

Provincetown Playhouse, titled by her, *Three Abandoned Films*. Then, in the shadow of Hiroshima, such films must have appeared hyper-aesthetic, given they were created against the grain if not in opposition to popular films about war efforts and trauma. Nevertheless, I suggest that her films were also thinking, unsentimentally, through war and about political upheaval, mass group disequilibrium.

In her acclaimed essay, "An Anagram of Ideas on Art, Form and Film" (1946), Deren writes of the general habituation to science, more specifically to the "almost casual acceptance of the use of atomic energy," part of a generally present-day "schizoid culture" cut off from a sensibility more akin to that of the seventeenth century, where arts and sciences were both open to "creative manipulation," not as part of a "homogenous whole," but of a constantly changing ground for exploration (Deren, 2005: 39). Deren believed in the scientific *reality* of fluid time and space – her figuration of the anagram not simply a filmic model: "where all the elements exist in simultaneous relationship; within it, nothing is first and nothing is last; nothing is future and nothing is past; nothing is old and nothing is new … except, perhaps the anagram itself" (2005: 36). This is not a plea for timeless stasis; contrarily, Deren insistently defies mass amnesia, emphasizing instead how "[man] has access to all his experience simultaneously … he is able to perceive that a natural, chronological whole is not immutable, but that it is a dynamic relationship of functioning parts" (2005: 44). Film could push beyond the *apparent* or ordinary, tapping into social and psychological overlays otherwise invisible, visualizing what she planned for her film on Haiti rituals, as a set of "staggered simultaneities" (cited in Sitney, 1979: 39).

It may appear perverse even to compare Deren's small but spectacular *oeuvre* with Buñuel's seminal prodigious career, and my puns are intentional in order to accent their significantly divergent gender perspectives, yet there is a fundamental linkage between them. Among other things, both intently explore how gravitational, captivating, hypnotic fields are created through an invisible "angel of history," Walter Benjamin's figure caught in the loss of a teleological or sacred time in the face of the past's ever-growing rubble (a miniature version of this exists as the trash mounts outside the captives' threshold in *El ángel exterminador*). The figurative angel is an unwilling, agog overseer with no capacity for redress of the horrors left in the wake of so-called civilization. Though Buñuel was not thinking of Benjamin directly (he says he came to his title through a friend's book), *El ángel exterminador* reverberates with Benjamin's melancholic conception of materialist history.

Buñuel and Deren meet then at a cross-section – a mesh, if you will – of a variety of methods that created the avant-garde lyricist film as historical document, epitomized by Deren. For instance, though published first in Spanish in *Cuadernos de la Universidad de Mexico* in December 1958, in "The Cinema, Instrument of Poetry," Buñuel articulates a stance parallel to Deren's, though after the fact of *Meshes of the Afternoon*. Cinema, he explains, is "an instrument of poetry, with all that this word possesses of a liberating sense, of a subversion of reality, of a threshold at the marvellous world of the subconscious," where it "joins and

separates the spectator off from his ordinary reality," "isolating him, thanks to the silence, the darkness, from what we might call his psychic habitat, the cinema becomes capable of captivation of him as no other human expression can" (Buñuel, 2000: 112, 113). This "hypnogogic inhibition" further makes the spectator more prone to lose intellectual capacity – thus he explains how popular non-radical realist films numb and captivate film viewers, without also prodding them. Somewhat paradoxically then, film is "of all the means of human expression, the one that is most like the mind while dreaming." What holds back the mediocre filmmaker are essentially "good taste" or "white humor" (Buñuel, 2000: 114). Indeed Deren was nearly alone in her experimental endeavor in the 1940s when most Hollywood films, with the exception of noir, had to concern themselves with war propaganda.

Even if they did not know of each other's works, the two artists thus share an essentially lyric and "real" (i.e., their sense that film mimics variable but material properties of movement and space) orientation, and an instinct to deploy what Gilles Deleuze calls the "time-image." Deleuze particularly focuses on Buñuel's turn from the "static shots" of *Un chien andalou* to a movement inextricably dependent upon time (1989: 102). Deleuze elaborates:

> Subjecting the image to a power of repetition-variation was already Buñuel's contribution, *and a way of setting time free*, of reversing its subordination to movement. Although we have seen that in most of Buñuel's work time remained a cyclical time, where sometimes forgetfulness (*The Devil and the Flesh*), sometimes exact repetition (*The Exterminating Angel*), marked the end of one cycle and the possible beginning of another, in a cosmos which was still unique. (1989: 102, emphasis added)

After *El ángel exterminador*, Deleuze speculates, "the regime of dream or fantasy was changing," by which he suggests that in Buñuel's *Belle de jour* (1967) the husband can be simultaneously crippled and not crippled. Surprisingly, Deleuze does not mention Deren, given *Meshes of the Afternoon* ends with a simultaneous possibility of the same woman dead and alive; indeed, Deren is bent upon "setting time free" in her own formulation in the 1946 manifesto "Anagram"; the reordering of time, at the crux of Deren's experiments, allows us to see an individual, in time-movement, framed by multiple perspectives.

Repetition as Structure

Meshes of the Afternoon anticipates Buñuel's strategies of repetition as a structuring principle – and as a way social groups solidify. In *El ángel exterminador*, the 18 dinner guests enter and speak the same dialogue twice, for instance, in the first scenes – hilariously notable because the maids have to hide twice before deserting the mansion. However, *Meshes of the Afternoon* heightens repetition as the very basis of



Figure 30.1 Maya Deren in *Meshes of the Afternoon*: the Botticelli pose. Maya Deren.

a film's structure. Sitney's surgical analysis of the film's several "cycles," a seamless hinging of repetition with a difference, devolves on shifting the iconic window shot, and the merging of dream and conscious states: "In the first transition between waking and sleeping, the film uses the wavy shadow over both the eye and the window. That sequence is interrupted by a view of the original road, where the black figure is about to appear" (1979: 11). What is particularly unique is how the second and third cycles "are cut in before the last of the old one is seen" (1979: 11). This is only a portion of Sitney's notation of what "happens" in *Meshes of the Afternoon*, but it reveals Deren's methodical usurpations of linearity through the material adjustments of the camera itself. For instance, the lens of the camera visibly zooms out when we see the "original road" below.

Further, Sitney provocatively compares Deren's image of herself, likened to a figure from Botticelli, to a window scene in *Un chien andalou*, to point up the contrast between the earlier surrealist endeavor and Deren's: "When we compare the image of Maya Deren, framed by the window, where the reflections of trees blend with the mass of her hair with Pierre Batcheff, sadistically watching the androgyne and the dismembered hand from his window in *Un Chien andalou*," the distinction, he writes, is "clear" – the latter evokes "a mad voyeurism, an icon of repressed sexual energy," the other an interior quest, although both films have "similar cutting on action across disjunctive spaces" (1979: 14) (Figure 30.1).

Deren describes the film with slightly different priorities in mind:

> the girl falls asleep and the dream consists of the manipulation of the elements of the incident. Everything which happens in the dream has its basis in a suggestion in

> the first sequence – the knife, the key, the repetition of stairs, the figure disappearing around the curve of the road. … cinematic techniques are employed to give a malevolent vitality to inanimate objects. The film is culminated by a double-ending in which it would seem that the imagined achieved, for her, such force that it became reality. (Cited in Sitney, 1979: 9)

This "malevolent vitality," "this taking over" the subject, so that *what is imagined might be achieved*, is akin to the communal mystifications engendered in *El ángel exterminador*.

Several other important repetitions in *Meshes of the Afternoon* emerge if we examine the hypnotic space: the climbing of stairs which variously entails the sense of being pushed back down the stairs (a "malevolent" domesticity of the apartment?) in a backward spiral, with Deren hugging the sides, showing space thick with resistance; the repeated taking the needle off the gramophone; the swallowing and finding the apartment key on her tongue; the pursuit of a dark robed "nun" figure with a mirror face who hovers over the "main Deren's" bed, to name several instances of reiteration and alteration. In both *Meshes of the Afternoon* and *El ángel exterminador*, there is a loss of visual control: who is in control of spatial trajectories, what is embedded in the home or in the street? Both films, particularly *Meshes of the Afternoon*, represent a centripetal force where seer and seen are entangled in a haunted space, pointing us to an aporia, where the power to fabricate beyond the spellbinding social matrix fails.

A loss and dissociated mastery of visual perspective turns upon the artificed Deren at the window in contrast to her two doubles at the kitchen table (three identical Deren figures have a game of key and knife, as it were, the two changing as each image of the self interacts with the object, signaling a detachment from any single "character's quest"); rather these apparitions of an out-of-body experience are also *at home*, sitting around the table, and thus quite distinct from the removed painterly image of Deren.

Deren herself describes the sequence of *Meshes of the Afternoon* in a way that supports a sense of self-erasure rather than discovery: "what I meant when I planned that four stride sequence was that you have to come a long way – from the beginning of time – to kill yourself, like life emerging from primeval waters" (cited in Sitney, 1979: 45). What would make for melodrama elsewhere – the same man (Hammid, photographer of most of the film) returns to the "dreamer" but finds her in a chair with her throat cut and shards of broken glass on the floor around her. Is this the moment when forensics should come in? (One might think of the detective novel she was working on just before this film.) Both *El ángel exterminador* and *Meshes of the Afternoon* insist upon an unsolvable mystery.

In the prototypic image often cited in *Meshes of the Afternoon*, Deren appears out of the world rather than in it, glazed over with water-stained glass – in contrast to the embodied if somnambulist selves enacting her wanderings. In other words, there is perhaps a stronger link between *Meshes of the Afternoon* and *El ángel*

exterminador than to *Un chien andalou*, if we think of *Meshes of the Afternoon* as more than a response to Surrealism (after all, both had thrown off their purported relation to it). Further, in *Meshes of the Afternoon*, instead of the individual, a social mythos is birthed through ensnaring repetition, seeing oneself in others and yet *not*. There is a desperate feel to both films; not only is the phone is off the hook in *Meshes of the Afternoon*, but a knife moves of its own accord, a key drops with unexpected buoyancy. Deren's face at the window does not invite identification, nor does she project the desiring libido at the window in *Un chien andalou*. Rather this *version* of Deren looks *through* the spectator, deflecting our ability to penetrate the image's opacity; it is a purposefully mythologized moment, archived and cut out from history, Botticellian; yet, like Buñuel's *El ángel exterminador*, Deren's *Meshes of the Afternoon*, in its flagrant multiplication of literal subject positions, confirms that we fall into identities and identifications, domesticated or mythologized; we do not always choose them.

While Buñuel seems to be markedly satirizing social rituals rather than depicting the "snatching" of the soul, as it were, the link between Buñuel's and Deren's galvanized "time-image," ritual repetition, and a fluid rearrangement of movable parts might be overlooked if we did not juxtapose *Meshes of the Afternoon* to the later *El ángel exterminador*. There is, of course, a literal as well as "imaginary" captivity in *El ángel exterminador*, ritualized and dependent upon what I call the Bermuda triangle of mutual relations. The pieces are moveable within a framework of simultaneous temporal categories as Deren theorizes; subject positions can even be reversed between human and natural: the "tame" bear swings from the chandelier and has the run of a villa while humans pace confined in their self-made cage in *El ángel exterminador*. The film suggests that if these pieces or positions are realigned, other movements become possible while others are foreclosed; or, as in *El ángel exterminador*, a temporary release from the magnetic field of social demand and need reopens. The "moment" of enchantment and inertia has to be recollected: each person in the group must repeat their moves, like chess pieces, before they can be released back into the flux of an illusory bodily independence. Silvia Pinal, the most famous actress in *El ángel exterminador*, discovers this directorial "key" that frees the group to cross the threshold. "What they really trace is a spiral" (Miles, 2005: 85), thus recalling *Meshes of the Afternoon*, where repeating is always "inevitably different."

The poster for *El ángel exterminador*, with its spiraled eye and disheveled female below, promises to echo the earlier film, *Un chien andalou,* but in *El ángel exterminador* the eye is that which cannot be seen, or that has been internalized as a collective gaze. *El ángel exterminador* (contrary to *Un chien andalou*) shifts to what Kaja Silverman calls the "heteropathic" point of view where the "heteropath, who identifies excorporatively … surrenders his or her customary specular parameters for those of the other" (1996: 23). In this way, heteropathy identifies itself with sacrifice, the mutilated body's perspective. During one restless group delirium in *El ángel exterminador*, one of the women fearfully hallucinates a dismembered hand.

The self-conscious "gag" acts as a narrative rupture – as well as some laughter at commercial film stunts – and at Dalí himself, whose image of the hand was his contributing dream to the genesis of the original material for *Un chien andalou* (Buñuel, 1980: 258). In the scene in *Un chien andalou* that Sitney contrasts to *Meshes of the Afternoon*, an androgyne pokes a cane at a severed hand, while a crowd ritually encircles him/her, a scenario that identifies dismemberment with both queerness (the androgyne's unstable sexual identity) and being entrapped by the "specular parameters" of the sadistic male spectator and his deflected desire. The hallucinating woman in *El ángel exterminador* is unable to crush the "stage" hand, a staple of horror films, even with a heavy statue; it returns to strangle her, and her stab at it scurrying across the coffee table misses. The point of this example is that the character gives up her "specular parameters" for that of a group's thralldom – a group avowal of and an acting out of multiple primal dependencies, as well as the larger culture's induction into powerful iconic references linked to nation and patriarchy, the hand a synecdoche for the Freudian "primal father," if you will, suturing communal behavior.

Although Buñuel's later films ultimately subordinated such hallucinatory dislocations to the "drama," the plot of *El ángel exterminador* depends upon temporal malleability: that a group of bourgeoisie can be stopped in space and time though several clocks mark time in the drawing room, calling up analogically the socio-psychological forms of entrancement and identification, from self to state, clerical to military. One repeats and performs an identity, but as the film acknowledges, the group identity can usurp or paralyze an individual's capacity for action. The ritual of a dinner party is that guests arrive, stay, and leave at semi-prescribed times; they behave in proscribed forms; if they cannot leave, the temporal and spatial mechanisms that allow for these rules and forms are laid bare – along with the drives of the participants to make sense of their psychic habitat. Deren was already laying bare these mechanisms of interrupted and repeated motion between the first wave of Surrealism and at the beginning of the Atomic Age.

Attacking Visual Space

In a symposium about poetry and film (1953), Deren attempted to distinguish poetry and short lyric films, beginning to suggest how space is "attacked" by the artist mapping an invisible space:

> The distinction of poetry is its construction (what I mean by "a poetic structure"), and the poetic construct arises from the fact, if you will, that it is a "vertical" investigation of a situation, in that it probes the ramifications of the moment, and is concerned with its qualities and depth, so that you have poetry concerned, in a sense, not with what is occurring but with what it feels like or what it means. A poem, to

> my mind, creates visible or auditory forms for something that is invisible, which is the feeling, or the emotion, or the metaphysical content of the movement. Now it also may include action, but its attack is what I would call the "vertical" attack, and this may be a little bit clearer if you will contrast it with what I would call the "horizontal" attack of drama, which is concerned with the development, let's say, within a very small situation from feeling to feeling. (Cited in Sitney, 2000: 174)

Deren points to Shakespeare as a model of an artist who could fruitfully combine the two directions: "horizontal" development counterpoints with periodic "vertical" investigations, which are the poems, the monologues.

Both *El ángel exterminador* and *Meshes of the Afternoon* strategically manipulate the dimensions of vertical and horizontal in that they seem to share an obsessive probing of what can be done with these spatial coordinates as a premise for group psychology, especially if an environment turns "heteropathic." Deren's ritual repetition disrupts what appears to be horizontal movement (walking, for instance, retracing the "protagonist's" steps), repeating patterns of movement; in some sense *Meshes of the Afternoon* is a template for the repetitive and ritual structure of *El ángel exterminador*.

Rituals of politeness drop; and the bourgeoisie lose their distinction from their servants, and from the audience. Individuals suspend within liminal positions, driven to occupy spaces they had not anticipated. As Julián Daniel Gutiérrez-Albilla dissects, human beings move, literally, toward the ground, "falling from grace," in his chapter on *El ángel exterminador* (2008). The party sinks to the animal level, operating on various levels of standing, sitting, lying down, dying, but uniquely Buñuel's film makes this strategic plot device into an aesthetic reconsideration of vertical class hierarchy as well as vertical organizations of images, bodily drives, and mass (including the Holy Mass) congregations and crowds. The drawing room becomes a psych ward, with uncontrollable laughter, screaming, and delusions.

As if heeding Deren's "Anagram" and her comments on lyric film, *El ángel exterminador* monopolizes vertical, horizontal, diagonal directions, while playing upon tropes of enclosure as partial openings, arches, and gateways, which operate much like the porous curtain in *Meshes of the Afternoon*. The threshold that suspends and isolates the group in their drawing room carefully mirrors the slightly elevated performance space, where Blanca first performs the music that mesmerizes the guests in their tired eagerness to go home. With characters yawning or looking at their wristwatches, they seem done with social ritual, for the present. The inset stage also recalls that they have just seen a play rendering of Sir Walter Scott's *Virgin of Lammermoor* (1819), wherein one of the guests has acted the impossible "virgin-bride," her double the so-called "Valkyrie," Leticia (played by Pinal), purported by her husband to be a perverse "virgin." When left alone, she breaks a window with an ashtray; someone in the next room blames it on "a passing Jew," another repetition of a national and racial division.

Outside the house, the solidity of the ornate gate is signaled by the effort it takes to close as well as by its peculiar independence of movement throughout the film. There is also the proscenium at the cathedral's baroque altar echoed in the cupola, linked as well to the tolling bell, joined to the performance of ritual acts of worship. In other words, though the film possesses dominantly interior shots, it gives the sense of successive gates, windows, and thresholds – the architectonics of opening and closing.

The arch leading from dining room to drawing room becomes the entry to an absurdist scenario, a location that, by the inevitable degradation of its inhabitants, resembles many spaces marked by historical meaning, such as an air-raid shelter – or, as one of the characters remarks, the site of a derailed train, where she once had to rub elbows with the third-class passengers; the most painful aspect of the "train wreck" was this mingling of classes. This kind of class insensitivity recalls the cruel laughter at the waiter's fall during dinner, a contrivance of the hostess, who doubles for director with his pranks. Meanwhile the religiously decorated paneled cabinets in the drawing room ultimately serve three functions (love, death, excretion): in the makeshift "water closet," paneled with an angel, the ornamental urns double for vessels for excrement or urine, but as Gutiérrez-Abilla points out, they are not visibly used, and thus create a "permanent narrative gap of this kind that solicits connotative reading" (2008: 100). Gutiérrez-Abilla further notes that Buñuel's emphasis upon the scatological foregrounds the porous boundary between ego and non-ego. The other cabinets support this hypothesis of an uncanny "gap": in one, we have the site of a romantic tryst, a couple dying in each other's arms; the other cabinet is the burial mound, to which the "survivors" bring stones collected from the wall that has been busted to gain access to the water pipe. It is in this cabinet that they try to conceal the sight and smell of Mr Russell's dead decaying body.

Mr Russell was, from the first night, the only guest seemingly with a moral conscience, overtly repelled by the ridicule of the falling servant; he further criticizes those characters engaged in small talk at the post-concert talk. The group members try to reconcile themselves to the "spontaneity" of the evening spent overnight, but clearly something more than etiquette unmasks other immediate rituals. The doctor tells his cancer patient that she will be well, while in the next instance, he tells another that this same patient is soon to die. This kind of social deception recoils upon the decadent "castaways" and unites them in a shared nightmare of confinement. The ordinary no longer functions. The clocks are meaningless. Mr Russell goes into a coma and dies. One character pulls out her hair. Some relief comes with the entrance of three sheep when they rush into "The Room" (as the screenplay refers to it). Miracles are carnal; fires are lit, appetites temporarily assuaged, while trash mounts outside the threshold; someone throws needed medicine into this heap, as if proving Le Bon and Freud's notion in *Group Psychology* that groups often sink to their lowest rung.

Bodies move in the night, until the men think segregation of the sexes might be best. A splinter group decides that the host should be sacrificed with the killing of a lamb: the host wears the headband of a martyr, before tying it around the

affectionate animal's eyes. With rolled-up pants and bare feet, there has been a return to nature. There is no real leader, only a self-appointed one, the hypocritical doctor – called "Sherlock" mockingly – who believes there is a "key," yet he remains unable to procure ethical repair.

A Communal Nightmare

The inexplicability attributed to *El ángel exterminador* resonates with ritualized behaviors and all sorts of "magical thinking," from the water from the pipes construed as sacred, as if from Lourdes; the Masonic call two men enact; the woman who introduces Kabala with her purse stuffed with chicken bones and feathers; the plea for the "unpronounceable word"; and finally, in the night's delirium, the turn to the Pope as if in a fairy tale, causing a definite "narrative gap," or denotative breakdown.

Close to the film's end, Buñuel cuts into the narrative with an artifice, here an inset silhouette that takes up the full screen, a device used sparingly, accompanied with voice-over dialogue (the mouths of the characters are closed) *shared* by several characters:

> VOICE OF NOBILE (softly): Look there … No: at the peak. Do you see him? ON THE SCREEN THERE APPEARS THE SILHOUETTE OF AN IMMENSE AND SNOWY MOUNTAIN, BUT BARELY ILLUMINATED, AS IF THROUGH A DENSE, DARK MIST.
> VOICE OF LETICIA (with respectful surprise): It's the Pope!
> VOICE OF NOBILE: Yes, there he is. How majestic, how solemn! It could be said he looks like a warrior.
>
> (2003: 190–191)

Meanwhile, Rita, in an ecstatic dream resonant with the vision of the Pope, hears a soothing woman's voice put a young boy to sleep, telling him of a guardian angel. Buñuel's figuration of the Pope as noble warrior linked to a guardian angel dialectically follows several terrifying tableaux of evasive images and cacophonies of sounds (blades cutting, buzzing, explosions). Shot 154 dissolves to emphasize a self, projected as "diffuse" image:

> We come to the face of Raúl who, stretched out on some sheets with a distant and beatific smile, his eyes half shut, is chewing something. The image gradually fades and is replaced by another one, very opaque, very diffuse, which almost leaves the screen black, consisting of a series of concentric circles which extend and ripple like the concentric waves of a rock-struck pond. Almost simultaneously, we hear voices. (2003: 183)

"Unintelligible noises," stray interactions, ellipses, and "flashing images" punctuate the communal nightmare. Among them is an apparitional helmeted



Figure 30.2 Maya Deren in goggles in *Meshes of the Afternoon*. Maya Deren.

head, introduced with lightning, barely recognizable, in definite counterpoint to the "silhouette" of the Pope. The image intercedes almost too quickly to grasp it.

Buñuel's use of apparitional images recalls Deren's eerie spatiality, and allows for another way to read the two filmmakers together. Deren's most terrifying image, for me, is not the figuration of the hooded "nun" with her mirror face (the sacred turned self-reflexive), but rather Deren, near the end of the film, wearing goggles, wielding a knife, a dark figure set against the archway of a lit exterior (Figure 30.2). In both these apparitions, it is useful to consider Walter Benjamin's description of the "dialectical image," summed up in a fragment as the site "[w]here thinking comes to a standstill in a constellation saturated with tensions," and further clarifying: "it is the caesura in the movement of thought" (1999: *Arcades Project* N10a, 3,475). Pointedly for my discussion, in "Thesis on the Philosophy of History" (1950), Benjamin undermines the historicist's "universal history" which "musters a mass of data to fill the homogenous, empty time" by contrasting it with materialist historiography, "based on a constructive principle" (as with montage) where "[t]hinking involves not only the flow of thoughts but their arrest as well" in a "configuration of shock," interrupting a mythical vision of essentially a Messianic time (1968: 257). Likewise, there is no seamless teleology through the clashing temporal schemes of the sleeping/dead Deren, her Botticelli projection, and then this barely legible postwar Deren (the futuristic goggles, resembling part of a gas mask, are a visual shock); the arching knife brings us to a standstill replete with suggestiveness.

Angel of History

The masterful last ten minutes of *El ángel exterminador* offer perhaps a clearer example of Benjamin's dialectical montage than that produced by either ghostly apparition above – and how group thinking impinges upon this analysis. In the last shots, quickly delivered in an otherwise semi-ponderously paced film, the parishioners comically look to one another for some excuse for why they are locked in a crowd trying to exit (our crew were in the front pew, counting their blessings). The exterior shot shows a herd of sheep, once more, hysterically on the run for the cathedral doors (an analogy to the religious flock and dialectical with the shots of a rioting mob). A quickly inserted image of helmeted and armed militia brings a caesura; throughout something has been brewing outside the villa besides the selling of balloons; alarming noises and marching sounds "inside" are considered at one point "like it's coming from outside" (Buñuel, 2003: 186) (Figure 30.3). The soldiers in this shot (evidently set against the villa's gate though dialectically following shots of the cathedral) are presumably fending off a riot; they stand stiffly while at a near distance, combat is erupting. The oppositional shots recall the earlier communal montage of dreams when, separate from any individual sleepers, we are privy to a whole array of image and sound repertoires, including the imagined comforts of religion (in hymns and mournful prayers) contrasting with semi-legible violently inflected images: sawing, grating, a helmet in shadows.

We are left to ask, among other things, what will happen to those entrapped in the cathedral while political upheaval heightens. Will one reality overwhelm the



Figure 30.3 Arming for an uprising in *El ángel exterminador*. Producciones Gustavo Alatriste.

other? The entire film ends on a "narrative gap," if you will; like *Meshes of the Afternoon*, it provides a double irresolvable ending.

The hypnotic effects of *Meshes of the Afternoon* segues with a Buñuelian ethics, a meshing of cultural memory, or rather its debris, and the various failed attempts to foreclose or mythologize so that we cannot, as spectators, ignore our "heteropathic" absorption in the cinematic field, and, paraphrasing Benjamin, we are (if we let the films take their toll) shocked into new critical awareness. By the time of *El ángel exterminador*, Buñuel had lived through two world wars and several revolutions (literal as well as aesthetic), making it suitable to press upon him a Benjaminian reading, yet Deren's seemingly more aesthetic experiments, where humans are shadows or doubles of themselves, partake of the ghostliness of the film encounter itself, marking celluloid as material explosiveness; film has never been entirely free of its fatal implications.

Situating themselves in particular material histories, Deren and Buñuel both attempted to yoke their investigations of dream material with documentary – an attraction to the social imaginary that *Meshes of the Afternoon* inaugurates in a semi-domestic way. Yet we recall that the social begins with a Lacanian doubling in the mirror stage, really an insertion of self in history. When Deren becomes a documentarian working alongside famed anthropologists Bateson and Mead to make footage for what becomes *The Divine Horsemen*, she enacts Benjamin's as well as her own belief that documentary is always an artifice, not an objective timeless account. Buñuel's early film on a neglected community, *Las Hurdes*, with its dissociated voice-over and other self-conscious tactics, calls out the apparent objectifying filmmaker, admitting that "civilized" individuals, including Buñuel, assent to the inhumanities the film recreates.

We have to wonder whether the "angel of history" is not more than hinted at in *El ángel exterminador*'s title. If not, the implication of Benjamin's historical perspective is still relevant. Buñuel imagines a last film, in "Pessimism," "about complicity of science and terrorism"; he provides a brief synopsis: "the bomb is assumed by governments, which take up the task of destroying the world" (1995: 262). Echoing Freud's *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1921–1922), where progress and civilization always carry a backward pull: "The glut of information has also brought about a serious deterioration in human consciousness," writes Buñuel. "What good does it do one to be present everywhere? Today man can never be alone with himself, as he could in the Middle Ages" (1995: 261). Buñuel's films can be set in extremely singular locations (like *Las Hurdes* or *El ángel exterminador*), yet each visibly stitched into a larger miasma of the social imaginary. In *El ángel exterminador*, "outside" crowds, including television reporters, have an opposite gravitational pull, preventing access to the "enchanted" house. *El ángel exterminador* cunningly reveals that it is not true that "when the spider dies, the web unravels" (as one character, charging for the death of the host, spitefully quips in the screenplay [Buñuel, 2003: 198]), for there exists an ever-expanding

magnetic field; Buñuel comes close to demystifying the way ideologies accrue power and disseminate it with an irrational will.

If we pair the images, Deren wearing goggles next to the phantom exterminator, in *El ángel exterminador* we might consider Buñuel's image as the sleeping version of historical witness, with eyes partially closed, head tilted backward. In the shot of Deren, essentially fitted out for guerrilla warfare, is she some angel alerting us to the edge of an illusory precipice, moving backwards into the surrealist future?

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Filmography

Mauprat
1926
Actor (Monk/Guardsman) and production assistant

Carmen
1926
Actor (Smuggler) and second assistant director

Siren of the Tropics
1927
Assistant director

La Chute de la maison Usher (The Fall of the House of Usher)
1928
France
Language: French
Director: Jean Epstein
Assistant director: Luis Buñuel
Writer: Luis Buñuel (adaptation from the book by Edgar Allan Poe)
Cast: Jean Debucourt (Sir Roderick Usher); Marguerite Gance (Madeline Usher); Charles Lamy (Allan)

Un chien andalou (An Andalusian Dog)
1929
France
Language: French
Running time: 17 minutes
Producer: Luis Buñuel

A Companion to Luis Buñuel, First Edition. Edited by Rob Stone and Julián Daniel Gutiérrez-Albilla.
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Director: Luis Buñuel
Writers: Luis Buñuel, Salvador Dalí
Editor: Luis Buñuel
Cinematographer: Albert Duverger, Jimmy Berliet (uncredited)
Original music: Luis Buñuel (music selection 1960 sonorized)
Cast: Pierre Batcheff (man); Simone Mareuil (young girl); Luis Buñuel; Salvador Dalí

L'Âge d'or (The Golden Age)
1930
France
Language: French
Running time: 60 minutes
Producer: Le Vicomte de Noailles
Director: Luis Buñuel
Writers: Luis Buñuel, Salvador Dalí (based on the writings of the Marquis de Sade)
Editor: Luis Buñuel
Cinematographer: Albert Duverger
Original music: Luis Buñuel (uncredited), Georges Van Parys (uncredited)
Cast: Gaston Modot (the man); Lya Lys (young girl); Caridad de Laberdesque (chambermaid/little girl); Max Ernst (leader of men in cottage); Josep Llorens Artigas (governor); Lionel Salem (Duke of Blangis); Germaine Noizet (marquise); Duchange (conductor); Bonaventura Ibáñez (marquis); Luis Buñuel; Paul Éluard

Las Hurdes, aka ***Tierra sin pan*** (Land without Bread)
1933
Spain
Language: Spanish
Running time: 30 minutes
Producers: Ramón Acín, Luis Buñuel
Director: Luis Buñuel
Writers: Luis Buñuel, Rafael Sánchez Ventura (commentary), Pierre Unik (commentary)
Editor: Luis Buñuel
Cinematographer: Eli Lotar
Original music: Darius Milhaus

La hija de Juan Simón (Juan Simon's Daughter)
1935
Producer

Don quintín el amargao (Don Quintin the Bitter)
1935
Producer and writer (uncredited)

¿Quién me quiere a mí? (Who Loves Me?)
1936
Producer and co-director

¡Centinela, alerta! (Guard! Alert!)
1937
Co-director

España 1936 (Spain, 1936)
1937
Documentary short
Screenplay and story

Gran casino, aka ***En el viejo Tampico*** (Magnificent Casino)
1947
Mexico
Language: Spanish
Running time: 92 minutes
Producer: Óscar Dancigers
Director: Luis Buñuel
Writers: Michel Veber (story), Mauricio Magdaleno (adaptation)
Editor: Gloria Schoemann
Cinematographer: Jack Draper
Original music: Manuel Esperón
Cast: Jorge Negrete (Gerardo Ramírez); Libertad Lamarque (Mercedes Irigoyen); Mercedes Barba (Camelia); Agustín Isunza (Heriberto); Julio Villarreal (Demetrio García); José Baviera (Fabio); Alfonso Bedoya (El Rayado); Francisco Jambrina (José Enrique Irigoyen); Fernanda Albany (Nanette); Charles Rooner (Van Eckerman); Bertha Lehar (Raquela Ortiz); Trío Calaveras (background singers)

El gran calavera (The Great Madcap)
1949
Mexico
Language: Spanish
Running time: 92 minutes
Producers: Óscar Dancigers, Fernando Soler
Director: Luis Buñuel
Writers: Janet Alcoriza, Luis Alcoriza (adapted from the play by Adolfo Torrado)
Editor: Carlos Savage
Cinematographer: Ezequiel Carrasco
Original music: Manuel Esperón
Cast: Fernando Soler (Ramiro de la Mata); Rosario Granados (Virginia de la Mata); Andrés Soler (Ladislao de la Mata); Rubén Rojo (Pablo); Gustavo Rojo (Eduardo de la Mata); Francisco Jambrina (Gregorio de la Mata); Luis Alcoriza (Alfredo)

Los olvidados (The Forgotten Ones, aka The Young and the Damned)
1950
Mexico
Language: Spanish
Running time: 85 minutes
Producers: Óscar Dancigers, Sergio Kogan, Jaime A. Menasce
Director: Luis Buñuel
Writers: Luis Alcoriza, Luis Buñuel
Editor: Carlos Savage
Cinematographer: Gabriel Figueroa
Original music: Rodolfo Halffter, Gustavo Pittaluga
Cast: Estela Inda (La madre de Pedro); Miguel Inclán (Don Carmelo, el ciego); Alfonso Mejía (Pedro); Roberto Cobo (El Jaibo); Alma Delia Fuentes (Meche); Francisco Jambrina (El director de la escuela granja); Jesús Navarro (El padre de Julián); Efraín Araúz (Cacarizo); Jorge Pérez (Pelón); Javier Amézcua (Julián); Mario Ramírez (Ojitos)

Cannes Film Festival – Best Director

Si usted no puede, yo sí
1951
Story

Susana (Susana, aka The Devil and the Flesh)
1951
Mexico
Language: Spanish
Running time: 86 minutes
Producers: Sergio Kogan, Manuel Reachi
Director: Luis Buñuel
Writers: Luis Buñuel; Manuel Reachi (novel), Jaime Salvador, Rodolfo Usigli
Editors: Jorge Bustos, Luis Buñuel (uncredited)
Cinematographer: José Ortiz Ramos
Original music: Raúl Lavista
Cast: Fernando Soler (Don Guadalupe); Rosita Quintana (Susana); Víctor Manuel Mendoza (Jesús); Matilde Palou (Doña Carmen); María Gentil Arcos (Felisa); Luis López Somoza (Alberto); Rafael Icardo (Don Severiano); Enrique del Castillo (Reformatory officer)

La hija del engaño (The Daughter of Deceit)
1951
Mexico
Language: Spanish
Running time: 78 minutes
Producer: Óscar Dancigers

Director: Luis Buñuel
Writers: Carlos Arniches (play *Don Quintín el Armargao o El que siembra vientos …*), Antonio Estremera (play *Don Quintín el Armargao o El que siembra vientos …* uncredited), Luis Alcoriza (adaptation), Janet Alcoriza (adaptation)
Editor: Carlos Savage
Cinematographer: José Ortiz Ramos
Original music: Manuel Esperón
Cast: Fernando Soler (Quintín Guzmán); Alicia Caro (Marta); Fernando Soto (Angelito); Rubén Rojo (Paco); Nacho Contla (Jonrón); Amparo Garrido (Jovita); Lily Aclemar (María); Álvaro Matute (Julio); Roberto Meyer (Lencho García); Conchita Gentil Arcos (Toña García); Francisco Ledesma

Subida al cielo (Ascent to Heaven, aka Mexican Bus Ride)
1952
Mexico
Language: Spanish
Running time: 85 minutes
Producers: Manuel Altolaguirre, María Luisa Gómez Mena
Director: Luis Buñuel
Writers: Manuel Altolaguirre (story and adaptation), Luis Buñuel (adaptation), Juan de la Cabada (adaptation and dialogue), Manuel Reachi (story), Lilia Solano Galeana (dialogue)
Editor: Rafael Portillo
Cinematographer: Alex Phillips
Original music: Gustavo Pittaluga
Cast: Lilia Prado (Raquel); Esteban Márquez (Oliverio Grajales); Luis Aceves Castañeda (Silvestre); Manuel Dondé (Eladio Gonzales); Roberto Cobo (Juan); Beatriz Ramos (Elisa); Manuel Noriega; Roberto Meyer (Don Nemesio Álvarez y Villalbazo); Pedro Elviro; Pedro Ibarra; Leonor Gómez (Doña Linda); Chel López; Paz Villegas; Silvia Castro; Paula Rendón; Víctor Pérez; Carmelita González (Albina); Gilberto González

Cannes Film Festival – Official Selection

Una mujer sin amor (A Woman without Love)
1952
Mexico
Language: Spanish
Running time: 85 minutes
Producer: Sergio Kogan
Director: Luis Buñuel
Writers: Guy de Maupassant (novel *Pierre et Jean*), Jaime Salvador (adaptation and dialogue), Rodolfo Usigli (additional dialogue), Luis Buñuel (technical screenplay)
Editor: Jorge Bustos

Cinematographer: Raúl Martínez Solares
Original music: Raúl Lavista
Cast: Rosario Granados (Rosario); Tito Junco (Julio Mistral); Julio Villarreal (Don Carlos Montero); Joaquín Cordero (Carlos); Xavier Loyá (Miguel); Elda Peral (Luisa); Jaime Calpe (Carlitos); Eva Calvo (Nurse); Miguel Manzano (Doctor)

El bruto (The Brute)
1953
Mexico
Language: Spanish
Running time: 81 minutes
Producers: Gabriel Castro, Óscar Dancigers, Sergio Kogan
Director: Luis Buñuel
Writers: Luis Alcoriza, Luis Buñuel
Editor: Jorge Bustos
Cinematographer: Agustín Jiménez
Original music: Raúl Lavista
Cast: Pedro Armendáriz; (Pedro); Katy Jurado (Paloma); Rosa Arenas (Meche); Andrés Soler (Andrés Cabrera); Roberto Meyer (Carmelo González); Beatriz Ramos (Doña Marta); Paco Martínez (Don Pepe); Gloria Mestre (María); Paz Villegas (María's mother); José Muñóz (Lencho Ruíz); Diana Ochoa (Lencho's wife); Ignacio Villalbazo (María's brother); Jaime Fernández (Julián García); Raquel García (Doña Enriqueta; Lupe Carriles (Maid); Guillermo Bravo Sos (El Cojo); José Chávez; Margarito Luna; Jorge Ponce; Polo Ramos; Amelia Rivera; Efraín Araúz

Él (This Strange Passion)
1953
Mexico
Language: Spanish
Running time: 92 minutes
Producer: Óscar Dancigers
Director: Luis Buñuel
Writers: Luis Buñuel and Luis Alcoriza (story), Luis Buñuel and Luis Alcoriza (adaptation)
Editor: Carlos Savage
Cinematographer: Gabriel Figueroa
Original music: Luis Hernández Bretón
Cast: Arturo de Córdova (Francisco Galván de Montemayor); Delia Garcés (Gloria Milalta); Aurora Walker (Esperanza Peralta); Carlos Martínez Baena (Padre Velasco); Manuel Dondé (Pablo); Rafael Banquells (Ricardo Luján); Fernando Casanova (Beltrán); José Pidal; Roberto Meyer; Luis Beristáin (Raúl Conde)

Cannes Film Festival – Official Selection

La ilusión viaja en tranvía (Illusion Travels by Streetcar)
1954
Mexico
Language: Spanish
Running time: 82 minutes
Producers: J. Ramón Aguirre, Armando Orive Alba, Mauricio de la Serna
Director: Luis Buñuel
Writers: Mauricio de la Serna (story), José Revueltas (adaptation), Mauricio de la Serna (adaptation), Luis Alcoriza (adaptation), Juan de la Cabada (adaptation)
Editors: Jorge Bustos, Luis Buñuel (uncredited)
Cinematographer: Raúl Martínez Solares
Original music: Luis Hernández Bretón
Cast: Lilia Prado (Lupita); Carlos Navarro (Juan Godínez "Caireles"); Fernando Soto (Tobías Hernández "Tarrajas"); Agustín Isunza (Papá Pinillos); Miguel Manzano (Don Manuel); Guillermo Bravo Sosa (Braulio); José Pida (Profesor); Felipe Montoya (Mecánico); Javier de la Parra (Benítez); Paz Villegas (Doña Mechita); Conchita Gentil Arcos (Pasajera); Diana Ochoa (Maestra del internado); Víctor Alcocer (Acaparador de maíz)

Abismos de pasión, aka ***Cumbres Borrascosas*** (Wuthering Heights)
1954
Mexico
Language: Spanish
Running time: 91 minutes
Producers: Óscar Dancigers, Abelardo L. Rodríguez
Director: Luis Buñuel
Writers: Emily Brontë (novel *Wuthering Heights*), Luis Buñuel (story), Pierre Unik (story – uncredited), Luis Buñuel (adaptation), Julio Alejandro (adaptation), Arduino Maiuri (adaptation)
Editor: Carlos Savage
Cinematographer: Agustín Jiménez
Original music: Raúl Lavista
Cast: Irasema Dilián (Catalina); Jorge Mistral (Alejandro); Lilia Prado (Isabel); Ernesto Alonso (Eduardo); Francisco Reiguera (José); Hortensia Santoveña (María); Jaime González Quiñones (Jorge); Luis Aceves Castañeda (Ricardo)

Robinson Crusoe, aka ***The Adventures of Robinson Crusoe***
1954
Mexico
Language: English
Running time: 90 minutes
Producers: Óscar Dancigers, Henry F. Ehrlich
Director: Luis Buñuel

Writers: Daniel Defoe (novel *Robinson Crusoe*), Hugo Butler (screenplay) originally as Philip Ansell Roll and Luis Buñuel (screenplay)
Editors: Carlos Savage, Alberto Valenzuela
Cinematographer: Alex Phillips
Original music: Anthony Collins
Cast: Dan O'Herlihy (Robinson Crusoe); Jaime Fernández (Friday); Felipe de Alba (Captain Oberzo); Chel López (Bosun); José Chávez (Pirate); Emilio Garibay (Leader of the mutiny)

Ensayo de un crimen, aka ***La vida criminal de Archibaldo de la Cruz*** (Rehearsal for a Crime, aka The Criminal Life of Archibaldo de la Cruz)
1955
Mexico
Language: Spanish
Running time: 89 minutes
Producers: Roberto Figueroa, Alfonso Patiño Gómez
Director: Luis Buñuel
Writers: Luis Buñuel, Eduardo Ugarte, Rodolfo Usigli (novel *Ensayo de un crimen*)
Editors: Jorge Bustos, Pablo Gómez
Cinematographer: Agustín Jiménez
Original music: Jorge Pérez
Cast: Miroslava (Lavinia); Ernesto Alonso (Archibaldo de la Cruz); Rita Macedo (Patricia Terrazas); Ariadna Welter (Carlota Cervantes); Andrea Palma (Mrs Cervantes); Rodolfo Landa (Alejandro Rivas); José María Linares-Rivas (Willy Corduran); Leonor Llausás (The Governess); Eva Calvo (Señora de la Cruz, Archibaldo's mother); Enrique Díaz "Indiano" (Señor de la Cruz, Archibaldo's father); Carlos Riquelme (The Commissioner); Chabela Durán (Sister Trinidad); Carlos Martínez Baena (Priest); Manuel Dondé (Colonel at wedding); Armando Velasco (Judge)

El río y la muerte (The River and Death)
1955
Mexico
Language: Spanish
Running time: 91 minutes
Producers: J. Ramón Aguirre, Armando Orive Alba
Director: Luis Buñuel
Writers: Luis Alcoriza, Luis Buñuel, Miguel Álvarez Acosta (novel *Muro blanco sobre roca negra*)
Editor: Jorge Bustos
Cinematographer: Raúl Martínez Solares
Original music: Raúl Lavista
Cast: Columba Domínguez (Mercedes); Miguel Torruco (Felipe Anguiano); Joaquín Cordero (Gerardo Anguiano); Jaime Fernández (Rómulo Menchaca);

Víctor Alcocer (Polo Menchaca); Silvia Derbez (Elsa); José Elías Moreno (Don Nemesio); Carlos Martínez Baena (Don Julián); Alfredo Varela (Chinelas); Miguel Manzano (Don Anselmo); Manuel Dondé (Zósimo Anguiano); Jorge Arriaga (Filogonio Menchaca); Roberto Meyer (Doctor); Chel López (El asesino); José Muñoz (Don Honorio); Humberto Almazán (Crescencio Menchaca); José Pidal (Médico)

Cela s'appelle l'aurore (That Is the Dawn)
1956
Italy / France
Language: French
Running time: 102 minutes
Producers: Claude Jaeger, Edmond Ténoudji
Director: Luis Buñuel
Writers: Emmanuel Roblès (novel), Luis Buñuel (adaptation) and Jean Ferry (adaptation), Jean Ferry (dialogue)
Editor: Marguerite Renoir
Cinematographer: Robert Lefebvre
Original music: Joseph Kosma
Cast: Georges Marchal (Doctor Valerio); Lucía Bosè (Clara); Julien Bertheau (The Commissioner Fasaro); Jean-Jacques Delbo (Gorzone); Simone Paris (Mrs Gorzone); Robert Le Fort (Pietro); Brigitte Elloy (Magda); Pascal Mazzotti (Azzopardi); Jane Morlet; Gaston Modot (Sandro's new tenant); Henri Nassiet (Angela's father); Marcel Pérès (Fesco); Yvette Thilly (Delphine); Giani Esposito (Sandro Galli); Nelly Borgeaud (Angela)

La Mort en ce jardin (Death in the Garden, aka The Diamond Hunters)
1956
France / Mexico
Language: French
Running time: 104 minutes
Producers: Óscar Dancigers, Léon Carré (uncredited), David Mage (uncredited)
Director: Luis Buñuel
Writers: Luis Alcoriza (adaptation), Luis Buñuel (adaptation), and Raymond Queneau (adaptation), Raymond Queneau (dialogue) and Gabriel Arout (dialogue), Jose André (novel)
Editors: Denise Charvein, Marguerite Renoir, Luis Buñuel (uncredited)
Cinematographer: Jorge Stahl Jr.
Original music: Paul Misraki
Cast: Simone Signoret (Djin); Charles Vanel (Castin); Georges Marchal (Shark); Michel Piccoli (Father Lizardi); Tito Junco (Chenko); Raúl Ramírez (Álvaro as Raúl Ramírez); Luis Aceves Castañeda (Alberto); Jorge Martínez de Hoyos (Captain Ferrero); Alberto Pedret (Second Lieutenant Jiménez); Marc Lambert (Miner); Stefani (Miner); Michèle Girardon (María Castin)

Nazarín
1959
Mexico
Language: Spanish
Running time: 94 minutes
Producers: Federico Amérigo, Manuel Barbachano Ponce
Director: Luis Buñuel
Writers: Julio Alejandro, Luis Buñuel, Emilio Carballido, Benito Pérez Galdós (novel)
Editor: Carlos Savage
Cinematographer: Gabriel Figueroa
Original music: Rodolfo Halffter
Cast: Francisco Rabal (Father Nazario); Marga López (Beatriz); Rita Macedo (Andara); Jesús Fernández (Ujo); Ignacio López Tarso (Thief in church); Luis Aceves Castañeda (Parricide); Ofelia Guilmáin (Chanfa); Noé Murayama (Pinto); Rosenda Monteros (Prieta)

Cannes Film Festival – International Prize

La Fièvre monte à El Pao (Fever Rises in El Pao, aka Republic of Sin)
1959
France / Mexico
Language: French
Running time: 109 minutes
Producers: Jacques Bar, Raymond Borderie, Óscar Dancigers, Gregorio Walerstein
Director: Luis Buñuel
Writers: Luis Alcoriza , Luis Buñuel, Henri Castillou, Charles Dorat, Louis Sapin
Editors: Rafael Ceballos, James Cuenet
Cinematographer: Gabriel Figueroa
Original music: Paul Misraki
Cast: Gérard Philipe (Ramón Vázquez); María Félix (Inés Rojas); Jean Servais (Alejandro Gual); Miguel Ángel Ferriz (Gov. Mariano Vargas); Raúl Dantés (Lt. García); Domingo Soler (Prof. Juan Cárdenas); Víctor Junco (Indarte); Roberto Cañedo (Col. Olivares); Luis Aceves Castañeda (López, Gual's aide); Armando Acosta (Manuel)

The Young One (La joven)
1960
Mexico / USA
Language: English
Running time: 96 minutes
Producer: George P. Werker
Director: Luis Buñuel
Writers: Peter Matthiessen (story *Travellin' Man*), Hugo Butler (screenplay originally as H.B. Addis) and Luis Buñuel (screenplay)
Editor: Carlos Savage

Cinematographer: Gabriel Figueroa
Cast: Zachary Scott (Miller); Bernie Hamilton (Traver); Key Meersman (Evalyn); Crahan Denton (Jackson); Claudio Brook (Rev. Fleetwood)

Cannes Film Festival – Special Mention

Viridiana

1961
Mexico / Spain
Language: Spanish
Running time: 90 minutes
Producers: Gustavo Alatriste, Ricardo Muñoz Suay, Pere Portabella
Director: Luis Buñuel
Writers: Julio Alejandro, Luis Buñuel (screenplay), Luis Buñuel (story), Benito Pérez Galdós (novel *Halma* uncredited)
Editor: Pedro del Rey
Cinematographer: José F. Aguayo
Original music: Gustavo Pittaluga
Cast: Silvia Pinal (Viridiana); Francisco Rabal (Jorge); Fernando Rey (Don Jaime); José Calvo (Beggar); Margarita Lozano (Ramona); José Manuel Martín (Beggar); Victoria Zinny (Lucía); Luis Heredia (Beggar); Joaquín Roa (Beggar); Lola Gaos (Beggar); María Isbert (Beggar); Teresa Rabal (Rita)

Cannes Film Festival – Palme d'or

El ángel exterminador (The Exterminating Angel)

1962
Mexico
Language: Spanish
Running time: 95 minutes
Producer: Gustavo Alatriste
Director: Luis Buñuel
Writers: Luis Alcoriza (uncredited), José Bergamín (play uncredited), Luis Buñuel (screenplay and dialogue)
Editor: Carlos Savage
Cinematographer: Gabriel Figueroa
Original music: Raúl Lavista
Cast: Silvia Pinal (Leticia "La Valkiria"); Enrique Rambal (Edmundo Nobile); Claudio Brook (Julio, Mayordomo; Steward); José Baviera (Leandro Gómez); Augusto Benedico (Carlos Conde; Doctor); Antonio Bravo (Sergio Russell); Jacqueline Andere (Alicia de Roc); César del Campo (Álvaro, Coronel); Rosa Elena Durgel (Silvia); Lucy Gallardo (Lucía de Nobile); Enrique García Álvarez (Alberto Roc); Ofelia Guilmáin (Juana Ávila); Nadia Haro Oliva (Ana Maynar); Tito Junco (Raúl); Xavier Loyá (Francisco Ávila); Xavier Massé (Eduardo); Ofelia Montesco (Beatriz); Luis Beristáin (Cristián Ugalde); Patricia Morán (Rita Ugalde); Patricia de Morelos (Blanca); Bertha Moss (Leonora)

Cannes Film Festival – FIPRESCI Prize

Le Journal d'une femme de chambre (The Diary of a Chambermaid)
1964
France / Italy
Language: French
Running time: 98 minutes
Producers: Michel Safra, Serge Silberman
Director: Luis Buñuel
Writers: Octave Mirbeau (based on the novel by), Luis Buñuel (adaptation and dialogue) and Jean-Claude Carrière (adaptation and dialogue)
Editors: Luis Buñuel, Louisette Hautecoeur
Cinematographer: Roger Fellous
Cast: Jeanne Moreau (Céléstine); Georges Géret (Joseph); Michel Piccoli (M. Monteil); Françoise Lugagne (Mme Monteil); Jean Ozenne (M. Rabour); Daniel Ivernel (M. Mauger); Gilberte Géniat (Rose); Bernard Musson (Le sacristain); Jean-Claude Carrière (Le curé); Dominique Sauvage (Claire); Muni (Marianne); Claude Jaeger (Le juge)

Llanto por un bandido (Weeping for a Bandit)
1964
Actor (el verdugo)

En este pueblo no hay ladrones (There Are No Thieves in This Village)
1965
Actor

Simón del desierto (Simon of the Desert)
1965
Mexico
Language: Spanish
Running time: 45 minutes
Producer: Gustavo Alatriste
Director: Luis Buñuel
Writers: Luis Buñuel (based on a story by), Luis Buñuel (screenplay and dialogue) and Julio Alejandro (screenplay and dialogue)
Editor: Carlos Savage
Cinematographer: Gabriel Figueroa
Original music: Raúl Lavista
Cast: Claudio Brook (Simón); Enrique Álvarez Félix (Brother Matías); Hortensia Santoveña (The Mother); Francisco Reiguera (The Devil as an Old Witch); Luis Aceves Castañeda (Priest); Enrique García Álvarez; Antonio Bravo (Priest); Enrique del Castillo (The Mutilated One); Eduardo MacGregor; Silvia Pinal (The Devil)
Venice Film Festival – Special Jury Prize
Venice Film Festival – FIPRESCI Prize

Belle de jour
1967
France/Italy
Language: French
Running time: 101 minutes
Producer: Raymond Hakim, Robert Hakim
Director: Luis Buñuel
Writers: Joseph Kessel (novel), Luis Buñuel (adaptation and dialogue) and Jean-Claude Carrière (adaptation and dialogue)
Editor: Louisette Hautecoeur
Cinematographer: Sacha Vierny
Cast: Catherine Deneuve (Séverine Serizy/Belle de Jour); Jean Sorel (Pierre Serizy); Michel Piccoli (Henri Husson); Geneviève Page (Mme Anaïs); Pierre Clémenti (Marcel); Françoise Fabian (Charlotte); Macha Méril (Renee); Muni (Pallas); Maria Latour (Mathilde); Claude Cerval; Michel Charrel (Footman); Iska Khan (Asian client); Bernard Musson (Majordomo); Marcel Charvey (Prof. Henri); François Maistre (L'ensignant); Francisco Rabal (Hyppolite); Georges Marchal (Duke); Francis Blanche (Monsieur Adolphe); Luis Buñuel

Venice Film Festival – Golden Lion
Venice Film Festival – Pasinetti Award

La Voie lactée (The Milky Way)
1969
France/West Germany/Italy
Language: French/Italian /Latin
Running time: 98 minutes
Producer: Serge Silberman
Director: Luis Buñuel
Writers: Luis Buñuel, Jean-Claude Carrière
Editor: Louisette Hautecoeur
Cinematographer: Christian Matras
Original music: Luis Buñuel
Cast: Paul Frankeur (Pierre); Laurent Terzieff (Jean); Alain Cuny (L'homme à la cape/Man with cape); Edith Scob (La Vierge Marie/Virgin Mary); Bernard Verley (Jésus/Jesus); François Maistre (Le curé fou/French Priest); Claude Cerval (Le brigadier/Brigadier); Muni (La mère supérieure/Mother Superior); Julien Bertheau (Richard "maître d'hôtel"/Maitre d'Hotel); Ellen Bahl (Madame Garnier); Michel Piccoli (Le marquis de Sade/The Marquis); Agnès Capri (La directrice de l'institution Lamartine/Teacher); Michel Etcheverry (L'inquisiteur/The Inquisitor); Pierre Clémenti (L'ange de la mort/The Devil); Georges Marchal (Le jésuite/The Jesuit); Jean Piat (Le comte/The Jansenist); Denis Manuel (Rodolphe, un étudiant protestant); Daniel Pilon (François, ami de

Rodolphe); Claudio Brook (L'évêque/Bishop); Julien Guiomar (Le curé espagnol/Spanish priest); Marcel Pérès (Le curé de l'auberge espagnole/The Posadero); Luis Buñuel (voice uncredited)

Berlin Film Festival – Interfilm Award

Tristana
1970
France/Italy/Spain
Language: Spanish
Running time: 105 minutes
Producers: Luis Buñuel, Robert Dorfmann
Director: Luis Buñuel
Writers: Julio Alejandro, Luis Buñuel (screen story), Benito Pérez Galdós (novel)
Editor: Pedro del Rey
Cinematographer: Jose F. Aguayo
Cast: Catherine Deneuve (Tristana); Fernando Rey (Don Lope); Franco Nero (Horacio); Lola Gaos (Saturna); Antonio Casas (Don Cosme); Jesús Fernández (Saturno); Vicente Soler (Don Ambrosio); José Calvo (Bellringer); Fernando Cebrián (Dr Miquis); Antonio Ferrandis; José María Caffarel; Cándida Losada (Citizen); Joaquín Pamplona; Mary Paz Pondal (Muchacha); Juanjo Menéndez (Don Cándido); José Blanch; Sergio Mendizábal (Headmaster)

Una historia decente
1971
Writer

Johnny Got His Gun
1971
Writer (uncredited)

Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie (The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie)
1972
France/Italy/Spain
Language: French
Running time: 102 minutes
Producer: Serge Silberman
Director: Luis Buñuel
Writers: Luis Buñuel and Jean-Claude Carrière
Editor: Hélène Plemiannikov
Cinematographer: Edmond Richard
Cast: Fernando Rey (Don Rafael Acosta); Paul Frankeur (M. Thevenot); Delphine Seyrig (Simone Thévenot); Bulle Ogier (Florence); Stéphane Audran (Alice Sénéchal); Jean-Pierre Cassel (Henri Sénéchal); Julien Bertheau (Mgr Dufour); Milena Vukotic (Inés); Maria Gabriella Maione (Guerilla); Claude Piéplu

(Colonel); Muni (Peasant); Pierre Maguelon (Sgt de police); François Maistre (Delecluze); Michel Piccoli (Ministre); Jean-Michel Dhermay

Oscar – Best Foreign Language Film

Le Moine (The Monk)
1972
Screenplay

Le Fantôme de la liberté (The Phantom of Liberty)
1974
Italy/France
Language: French
Running time: 104 minutes
Producers: Ulrich Picar (as Ully Pickard), Serge Silberman
Director: Luis Buñuel
Writer: Luis Buñuel, Jean-Claude Carrière
Editor: Hélène Plemiannikov
Cinematographer: Edmond Richard
Cast: Adriana Asti (La dame en noir et la soeur du premier préfet/Prefect's Sister); Julien Bertheau (Le premier préfet de police/First Prefect); Jean-Claude Brialy (Foucauld/Mr Foucauld); Adolfo Celi (Le docteur de Legendre/Doctor Pasolini); Paul Frankeur (L'aubergiste/Innkeeper); Michael Lonsdale (Le chapelier/Hatter); Pierre Maguelon (Gérard, le gendarme/Policeman); François Maistre (Le professeur des gendarmes/Professor); Hélène Perdrière (La vieille tante/Aunt); Michel Piccoli (Le second préfet de police/Second Prefect); Claude Piéplu (Le commissaire de police/Commissioner); Jean Rochefort (Legendre/Mr Legendre); Bernard Verley (Le capitaine des dragons/Judge); Milena Vukotic (L'infirmière/Nurse); Monica Vitti (Mme Foucaud/Mrs Foucauld); Jenny Astruc (La femme du professeur); Pascale Audret (Mme Legendre); Jacques Debary (Le président du tribunal); Anne-Marie Deschodt (Edith Rosenblum/Miss Rosenblum); Jean-Michel Dhermay (L'officier français); Philippe Lancelot (L'autre officier); Paul Le Person (Le père Gabriel/Monk); Bernard Musson (Le père Raphaël/Monk); Marie-France Pisier (Mme Calmette/Mrs. Calmette); Pierre-François Pistorio (François, le neveu)

Cet obscur objet du désir (That Obscure Object of Desire)
1977
France/Spain
Language: French
Running time: 105 minutes
Producer: Serge Silberman
Director: Luis Buñuel
Writers: Luis Buñuel, Jean-Claude Carrière, Pierre Louÿs (inspired by the book *La femme et le pantin*)

Editor: Hélène Plemiannikov
Cinematographer: Edmond Richard
Cast: Fernando Rey (Mathieu); Carole Bouquet (Conchita); Ángela Molina (Conchita); Julien Bertheau (Judge); André Weber (Valet); Milena Vukotic (Woman in Train); María Asquerino (Encarnación, madre de Conchita); Ellen Bahl (Manolita); Valerie Blanco; Auguste Carrière (La femme qui reprise dans la vitrine); André Lacombe; Lita Lluch-Peiro; Annie Monange; Jean-Claude Montalban; Muni (Concierge); Bernard Musson (Deporting policeman); Piéral (Psychologist); Isabelle Rattier; David Rocha (El Morenito); Isabelle Sadoyan (Jadiner)

Igra o pamcenju i umiranju
1984
Writer, previously unproduced screenplay

La novia de medianoche
1997
Writer, previously unproduced screenplay

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